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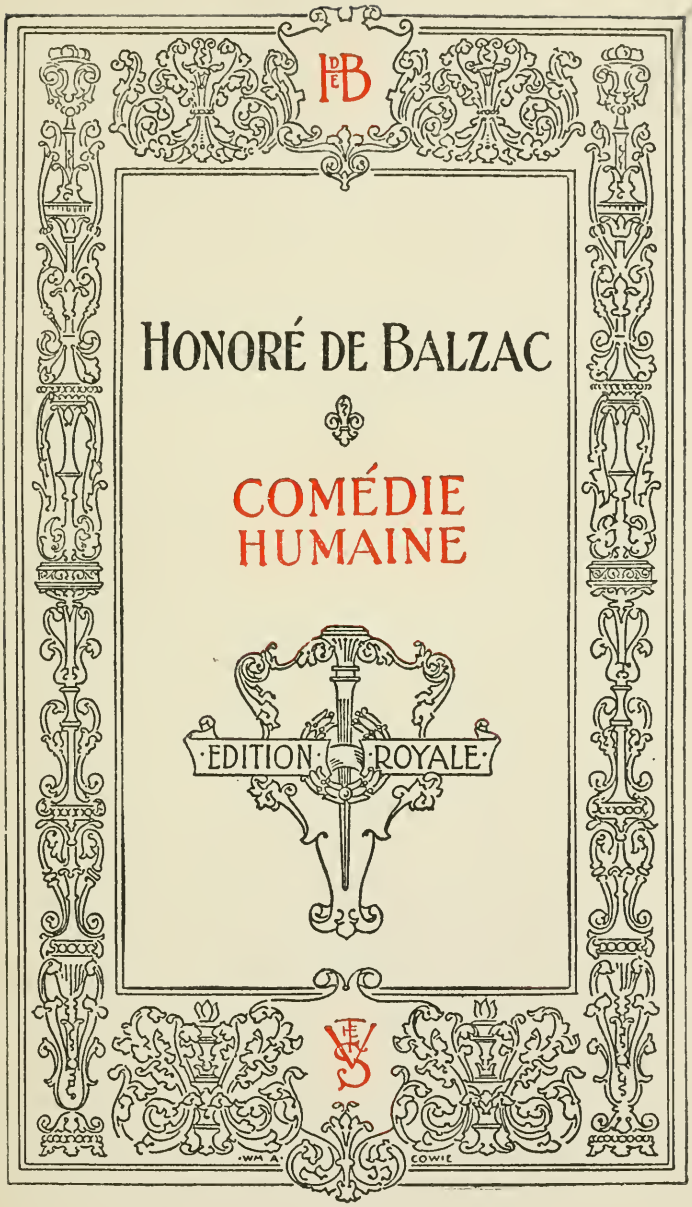
HONORÉ DE BALZAC
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The Sainte-Chapelle and gateway to the Palais de Justice, 1830

THE WORKS OF HONORÉ·DE·BALZAC

SCENES·FROM·A COURTESAN'S·LIFE

(*Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes*)

PART SECOND

AND

THE GOVERNMENT CLERKS

XXIV

TRANSLATED BY

JAMES WARING

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

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CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION - - - - ix

SCENES FROM A COURTESAN'S LIFE
(*Concluded*):

VAUTRIN'S LAST AVATAR - - - 1

THE GOVERNMENT CLERKS - - 147

ILLUSTRATIONS

PHOTOGRAVURES

THE SAINT-CHAPELLE AND GATEWAY TO THE PALAIS DE JUSTICE, 1830 - *Frontispiece*

PAGE

"GOOD-BYE, MY DEAR FELLOW . . . THE LENGTH OF THREE CORPSES PARTS YOU FROM ME" - - - 130

PHELLION - - - - - - 236

"A WORD OR TWO WITH YOU, MY LORD!" - 315

SCENES FROM A COURTESAN'S LIFE

(CONCLUDED)

AND

THE GOVERNMENT CLERKS

INTRODUCTION

As has been noted in the Introduction to the first volume of the *Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes, La dernière Incarnation de Vautrin,* though forming, according to the author's conception, an integral part of that work, stands in more ways than one aloof from it. It was much later written than the earlier parts, except *Ou mènent les mauvais Chemins,* and it was later written even than that. Moreover, it marks in two different ways a much maturer stage of the author's ideas as to heroic convicts—a stage in which, I think, it is not fanciful to detect a considerable reduction of the gigantesque element and a substitution of something else for it.

We may note this in two ways. In the earlier conception of the matter, as exemplified chiefly in *Ferragus* and *Le Père Goriot,* the heroic element considerably dominates the practical. In the one Balzac had shown an ex-convict defying society and executing a sort of private justice or injustice, just as he pleased. In the other he had adopted (and had maintained still later in an apologetic epistle to a newspaper editor, which will be found in his works) a notion of the criminal as of a sort of *puissance du mal* pervading and dominating society itself. In the present book, or section of a book, which, it must never be forgotten, was one of his very latest, things are adjusted to a much more actual level. The thieves'-latin which it contains is only an indirect symptom of this. Ainsworth in England and others in France had

anticipated him notably in this. But indirectly it shows us that he had come down many stages from his earlier heights. Bourignard and the early Vautrin worked in clouds, afar and apart; they had little to do with actual life: in *La dernière Incarnation de Vautrin* we find ourselves face to face with the actual, or only slightly "disrealized" realities of convict life. Some of these details may be disgusting, but most of them, as we know from unromantic authorities, are tolerably true; and where truth is, there, with an artist like Balzac, art never fails. It is the drawback of the youthful poet or novelist that he is insufficiently provided with veracity, of the aging novelist or poet that inspiration and the faculty of turning fact into great fiction fail him. But there was no danger of this latter with the author, at nearly twenty years' interval, of *Le dernier Chouan* and *La Cousine Bette*. He could only gain by the dispelling of illusion, and he could not lose by the practice of his craft.

Another and still more interesting mark of resipiscence is conveyed in the practical defeat of Vautrin and in his desertion to the side of society itself, which, we are given to understand, he never afterwards left, nor less perhaps in the virtual rebuff which Corentin (another *héros du mal* of the older time) receives at the end. The old betrayer of Mlle. de Verneuil is told in so many words that he can be dispensed with; the old enemy of society has to take its wages; the funds of *la haute pègre* are squandered on Lucien de Rubempré, just as any foolish heir might squander them, and the whole scheme of a conspiracy against order breaks down. True, Madame de Maufrigneuse and Madame de Sérizy get their letters; but that is neither here nor there.

The most interesting scene in the book, I suppose, is that

in which the scheme of the prison authorities for trapping Vautrin fails by dint of his adroitness, and the command of a strong mind over a weak one, as between him and the other convicts, to whom he had been a fraudulent trustee. It is not free from unsavory details, but the mastery of it quite exceeds its repulsiveness. It is worth noting, too, that Balzac shows how thoroughly he has mastered the principles of his art by intermixing this very success with evidences of Vautrin's humanity after all. And of minor details there is not, I think, one more interesting in the book, while there are few more interesting in all Balzac, than the fact that in the opening interview between Camusot and his wife the author borrows from *Guy Mannering* the incident of Pleydell's discovering the importance of Dirk Hatteraick's pocketbook by the play of his countenance as his examiner passes from that to other things, and *vice versâ*. The fact is that Balzac was to the very last an ardent devotee of Sir Walter, and that —like all great novelists, I think, without exception, but not like M. Zola and some other persons both abroad and at home —he was perfectly alive to the fact that Scott's workmanship, his analysis, his knowledge of human nature, and his use of it, are about as far from superficiality as the equator is from the pole. In construction and in style Scott was careless, and as it happens, Balzac was in neither respect impeccable. But in other ways the pupil had, and knew that he had, little advantage over the master except in a certain parade of motives and details, as well as (though not to a very great extent) in a greater comprehension of passion, and, of course, to a much greater extent in liberty of exhibiting that comprehension. Let us read Balzac and admire Balzac as much as possible; but when any one talks of Scott as shallow in

comparison with Balzac, let us leave the answer to Balzac himself.

(For bibliography, see Introduction to *Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes.*)

The long piece entitled *Les Employés,* which fills nearly two-thirds of the volume, has rather dubious claims to be called a novel or a story at all. Balzac, either from the fact of his father having been employed in the civil department of the army, or because he had been destined himself by kind family friends to the *rond-de-cuir* (the office-stool), or because he was a typical Frenchman—for while half the French nation sits on these stools, the other half divides its time between laughing at them and envying them—was always exceedingly intent on the ways and manners of government offices. One of the least immature scenes of his *Œuvres de Jeunesse,* the opening passage of *Argow le Pirate,* concerns the subject. The collection of his *Œuvres Diverses,* only of late years opened to the explorer who has less than libraries at his command, contains repeated returns to it, of which the *Physiologie de L'Employé* was the best known and most popular; and the novels proper are full of dealings with it. In this particular piece, indeed, Balzac has actually incorporated something from his earlier *Physiologie,* and has thus made it even less of a story than it was when it first appeared under the title of *La Femme Supérieure.* In that condition it was divided into three parts—*Entre deux Femmes, Les Bureaux,* and *A qui la place.* The later shape, with the additions just referred to, tended to overweight the middle part still more at the expense of the two ends; and

as it stands, it is little more than a criticism, partly in argument, partly in dialogue, of administration and administrative methods, with a certain slight personal interest at both ends.

Les Employés was originally dated July 1836. It appeared in the *Presse* just a year after its composition, but was then called *La Femme Supérieure,* which name it kept on its publication by Werdet as a book in 1838. It was here enlarged, and had *La Torpille* (the first title of *Esther* or *Comment aiment les Filles*) and *La Maison Nucingen* for companions. There were, as usual, chapter divisions and titles. At its first appearance in the *Comédie,* the actual title and *La Femme Supérieure* were given as alternatives, but later *Les Employés* displaced the other.

G. S.

SCENES FROM A COURTESAN'S LIFE

VAUTRIN'S LAST AVATAR

"WHAT is it, Madeleine?" asked Madame Camusot, seeing her maid come into the room with the particular air that servants assume in critical moments.

"Madame," said Madeleine, "monsieur has just come in from Court; but he looks so upset, and is in such a state, that I think perhaps it would be well for you to go to his room."

"Did he say anything?" asked Madame Camusot.

"No, madame; but we never have seen monsieur look like that; he looks as if he were going to be ill, his face is yellow—he seems all to pieces——"

Madame Camusot waited for no more; she rushed out of her room and flew to her husband's study. She found the lawyer sitting in an armchair, pale and dazed, his legs stretched out, his head against the back of it, his hands hanging limp, exactly as if he were sinking into idiotcy.

"What is the matter, my dear?" said the young woman in alarm.

"Oh! my poor Amélie, the most dreadful thing has happened—I am still trembling. Imagine, the public prosecutor—no, Madame de Sérizy—that is—I do not know where to begin."

"Begin at the end," said Madame Camusot.

"Well, just as Monsieur Popinot, in the council room of the first Court, had put the last signature to the ruling of 'insufficient cause' for the apprehension of Lucien de Rubempré on the ground of my report, setting him at liberty—in fact, the whole thing was done, the clerk was going off with the minute book, and I was quit of the whole business—the

President of the Court came in and took up the papers. 'You are releasing a dead man,' said he, with chilly irony; 'the young man is gone, as Monsieur de Bonald says, to appear before his natural Judge. He died of apoplexy——'

"I breathed again, thinking it was sudden illness.

" 'As I understand you, Monsieur le Président,' said Monsieur Popinot, 'it is a case of apoplexy like Pichegru's.'

" 'Gentlemen,' said the President then, very gravely, 'you must please to understand that for the outside world Lucien de Rubempré died of an aneurism.'

"We all looked at each other. 'Very great people are concerned in this deplorable business,' said the President. 'God grant for your sake, Monsieur Camusot, though you did no less than your duty, that Madame de Sérizy may not go mad from the shock she has had. She was carried away almost dead. I have just met our public prosecutor in a painful state of despair.'—'You have made a mess of it, my dear Camusot,' he added in my ear.—I assure you, my dear, as I came away I could hardly stand. My legs shook so that I dared not venture into the street. I went back to my room to rest. Then Coquart, who was putting away the papers of this wretched case, told me that a very handsome woman had taken the Conciergerie by storm, wanting to save Lucien, whom she was quite crazy about, and that she fainted away on seeing him hanging by his necktie to the window-bar of his room. The idea that the way in which I questioned that unhappy young fellow—who, between ourselves, was guilty in many ways—can have led to his committing suicide has haunted me ever since I left the Palais, and I feel constantly on the point of fainting——"

"What next? Are you going to think yourself a murderer because a suspected criminal hangs himself in prison just as you were about to release him?" cried Madame Camusot. "Why, an examining judge in such a case is like a general whose horse is killed under him!—That is all."

"Such a comparison, my dear, is at best but a jest, and jesting is out of place now. In this case the dead man

clutches the living. 'All our hopes are buried in Lucien's coffin."

"Indeed?" said Madame Camusot, with deep irony.

"Yes, my career is closed. I shall be no more than an examining judge all my life. Before this fatal termination Monsieur de Granville was annoyed at the turn the preliminaries had taken; his speech to our President makes me quite certain that so long as Monsieur de Granville is public prosecutor I shall get no promotion."

Promotion! The terrible thought, which in these days makes a judge a mere functionary.

Formerly a magistrate was made at once what he was to remain. The three or four presidents' caps satisfied the ambitions of lawyers in each *Parlement.* An appointment as councillor was enough for a de Brosses or a Molé, at Dijon as much as in Paris. This office, in itself a fortune, required a fortune brought to it to keep it up.

In Paris, outside the *Parlement,* men of the long robe could hope only for three supreme appointments: those of Controller-General, Keeper of the Seals, or Chancellor. Below the *Parlement,* in the lower grades, the president of a lower Court thought himself quite of sufficient importance to be content to fill his chair to the end of his days.

Compare the position of a councillor in the High Court of Justice in Paris, in 1829, who has nothing but his salary, with that of a councillor to the *Parlement* in 1729. How great is the difference! In these days, when money is the universal social guarantee, magistrates are not required to have—as they used to have—fine private fortunes: hence we see deputies and peers of France heaping office on office, at once magistrates and legislators, borrowing dignity from other positions than those which ought to give them all their importance.

In short, a magistrate tries to distinguish himself for promotion as men do in the army, or in a Government office.

This prevailing thought, even if it does not affect his independence, is so well known and so natural, and its effects are

so evident, that the law inevitably loses some of its majesty in the eyes of the public. And, in fact, the salaries paid by the State makes priests and magistrates mere *employés*. Steps to be gained foster ambition, ambition engenders subservience to power, and modern equality places the judge and the person to be judged in the same category at the bar of society. And so the two pillars of social order, Religion and Justice, are lowered in this nineteenth century, which asserts itself as progressive in all things.

"And why should you never be promoted?" said Amélie Camusot.

She looked half-jestingly at her husband, feeling the necessity of reviving the energies of the man who embodied her ambitions, and on whom she could play as on an instrument.

"Why despair?" she went on, with a shrug that sufficiently expressed her indifference as to the prisoner's end. "This suicide will delight Lucien's two enemies, Madame d'Espard and her cousin, the Comtesse du Châtelet. Madame d'Espard is on the best terms with the Keeper of the Seals; through her you can get an audience of His Excellency and tell him all the secrets of this business. Then, if the head of the law is on your side, what have you to fear from the president of your Court or the public prosecutor?"

"But, Monsieur and Madame de Sérizy?" cried the poor man. "Madame de Sérizy is gone mad, I tell you, and her madness is my doing, they say."

"Well, if she is out of her mind, O judge devoid of judgment," said Madame Camusot, laughing, "she can do you no harm.—Come, tell me all the incidents of the day."

"Bless me!" said Camusot, "just as I had cross-questioned the unhappy youth, and he had deposed that the self-styled Spanish priest is really Jacques Collin, the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse and Madame de Sérizy sent me a note by a servant begging me not to examine him. It was all over!——"

"But you must have lost your head!" said Amélie. "What was to prevent you, being so sure as you are of your clerk's fidelity, from calling Lucien back, reassuring him cleverly, and revising the examination?"

"Why, you are as bad as Madame de Sérizy; you laugh justice to scorn," said Camusot, who was incapable of flouting his profession. "Madame de Sérizy seized the minutes and threw them into the fire."

"That is the right sort of woman! Bravo!" cried Madame Camusot.

"Madame de Sérizy declared she would sooner see the Palais blown up than leave a young man who had enjoyed the favors of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse and her own to stand at the bar of a Criminal Court by the side of a convict!"

"But, Camusot," said Amélie, unable to suppress a superior smile, "your position is splendid——"

"Ah! yes, splendid!"

"You did your duty."

"But all wrong; and in spite of the jesuitical advice of Monsieur de Granville, who met me on the Quai Malaquais."

"This morning!"

"This morning."

"At what hour?"

"At nine o'clock."

"Oh, Camusot!" cried Amélie, clasping and wringing her hands, "and I am always imploring you to be constantly on the alert.—Good heavens! it is not a man, but a barrow-load of stones that I have to drag on!—Why, Camusot, your public prosecutor was waiting for you.—He must have given you some warning."

"Yes indeed——"

"And you failed to understand him! If you are so deaf, you will indeed be an examining judge all your life without any knowledge whatever of the question.—At any rate, have sense enough to listen to me," she went on, silencing her husband, who was about to speak. "You think the matter is done for?" she asked.

Camusot looked at his wife as a country bumpkin looks at a conjurer.

"If the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse and Madame de Sérizy are compromised, you will find them both ready to patronize

you," said Amélie. "Madame de Sérizy will get you admission to the Keeper of the Seals, and you will tell him the secret history of the affair; then he will amuse the King with the story, for sovereigns always wish to see the wrong side of the tapestry and to know the real meaning of the events the public stare at open-mouthed. Henceforth there will be no cause to fear either the public prosecutor or Monsieur de Sérizy."

"What a treasure such a wife is!" cried the lawyer, plucking up courage. "After all, I have unearthed Jacques Collin; I shall send him to his account at the Assize Court and unmask his crimes. Such a trial is a triumph in the career of an examining judge!"

"Camusot," Amélie began, pleased to see her husband rally from the moral and physical prostration into which he had been thrown by Lucien's suicide, "the President told you that you had blundered to the wrong side. Now you are blundering as much to the other—you are losing your way again, my dear."

The magistrate stood up, looking at his wife with a stupid stare.

"The King and the Keeper of the Seals will be glad, no doubt, to know the truth of this business, and at the same time much annoyed at seeing the lawyers on the Liberal side dragging important persons to the bar of opinion and of the Assize Court by their special pleading—such people as the Maufrigneuses, the Sérizys, and the Grandlieus, in short, all who are directly or indirectly mixed up with this case."

"They are all in it; I have them all!" cried Camusot.

And Camusot walked up and down the room like Sganarelle on the stage when he is trying to get out of a scrape.

"Listen, Amélie," said he, standing in front of his wife. "An incident recurs to my mind, a trifle in itself, but, in my position, of vital importance.

"Realize, my dear, that this Jacques Collin is a giant of cunning, of dissimulation, of deceit.—He is—what shall I say?—the Cromwell of the hulks!—I never met such a scoun-

drel; he almost took me in.—But in examining a criminal, a little end of thread leads you to find a ball, is a clue to the investigation of the darkest consciences and obscurest facts.—When Jacques Collin saw me turning over the letters seized in Lucien de Rubempré's lodgings, the villain glanced at them with the evident intention of seeing whether some particular packet were among them, and he allowed himself to give a visible expression of satisfaction. This look, as of a thief valuing his booty, this movement, as of a man in danger saying to himself, 'My weapons are safe,' betrayed a world of things.

"Only you women, besides us and our examinees, can in a single flash epitomize a whole scene, revealing trickery as complicated as safety-locks. Volumes of suspicion may thus be communicated in a second. It is terrifying—life or death lies in a wink.

"Said I to myself, 'The rascal has more letters in his hands than these!'—Then the other details of the case filled my mind; I overlooked the incident, for I thought I should have my men face to face, and clear up this point afterwards. But it may be considered as quite certain that Jacques Collin, after the fashion of such wretches, has hidden in some safe place the most compromising of the young fellow's letters, adored as he was by——"

"And yet you are afraid, Camusot? Why, you will be President of the Supreme Court much sooner than I expected!" cried Madame Camusot, her face beaming. "Now, then, you must proceed so as to give satisfaction to everybody, for the matter is looking so serious that it might quite possibly be snatched from us.—Did they not take the proceedings out of Popinot's hands to place them in yours when Madame d'Espard tried to get a Commission in Lunacy to incapacitate her husband?" she added, in reply to her husband's gesture of astonishment. "Well, then, might not the public prosecutor, who takes such keen interest in the honor of Monsieur and Madame de Sérizy, carry the case to the Upper Court and get a councillor in his interest to open a fresh inquiry?"

"Bless me, my dear, where did you study criminal law?" cried Camusot. "You know everything; you can give me points."

"Why, do you believe that, by to-morrow morning, Monsieur de Granville will not have taken fright at the possible line of defence that might be adopted by some liberal advocate whom Jacques Collin would manage to secure; for lawyers will be ready to pay him to place the case in their hands! —And those ladies know their danger quite as well as you do —not to say better; they will put themselves under the protection of the public prosecutor, who already sees their families unpleasantly close to the prisoner's bench, as a consequence of the coalition between this convict and Lucien de Rubempré, betrothed to Mademoiselle de Grandlieu—Lucien, Esther's lover, Madame de Maufrigneuse's former lover, Madame de Sérizy's darling. So you must conduct the affair in such a way as to conciliate the favor of your public prosecutor, the gratitude of Monsieur de Sérizy, and that of the Marquise d'Espard and the Comtesse du Châtelet, to reinforce Madame de Maufrigneuse's influence by that of the Grandlieus, and to gain the complimentary approval of your President.

"I will undertake to deal with the ladies—d'Espard, de Maufrigneuse, and de Grandlieu.

"You must go to-morrow morning to see the public prosecutor. Monsieur de Granville is a man who does not live with his wife; for ten years he had for his mistress a Mademoiselle de Bellefeuille, who bore him illegitimate children—didn't she? Well, such a magistrate is no saint; he is a man like any other; he can be won over; he must give a hold somewhere; you must discover the weak spot and flatter him; ask his advice, point out the dangers attending the case; in short, try to get him into the same boat, and you will be——"

"I ought to kiss your footprints!" exclaimed Camusot, interrupting his wife, putting his arm round her, and pressing her to his heart. "Amélie, you have saved me!"

"I brought you in tow from Alençon to Mantes, and from Mantes to the Metropolitan Court," replied Amélie. "Well,

well, be quite easy!—I intend to be called Madame la Présidente within five years' time. But, my dear, pray always think over everything a long time before you come to any determination. A judge's business is not that of a fireman; your papers are never in a blaze, you have plenty of time to think; so in your place blunders are inexcusable."

"The whole strength of my position lies in identifying the sham Spanish priest with Jacques Collin," the judge said, after a long pause. "When once that identity is established, even if the Bench should take the credit of the whole affair, that will still be an ascertained fact which no magistrate, judge, or councillor can get rid of. I shall do like the boys who tie a tin kettle to a cat's tail; the inquiry, whoever carries it on, will make Jacques Collin's tin kettle clank."

"Bravo!" said Amélie.

"And the public prosecutor would rather come to an understanding with me than with any one else, since I am the only man who can remove the Damocles' sword that hangs over the heart of the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

"Only you have no idea how hard it will be to achieve that magnificent result. Just now, when I was with Monsieur de Granville in his private office, we agreed, he and I, to take Jacques Collin at his own valuation—a canon of the Chapter of Toledo, Carlos Herrera. We consented to recognize his position as a diplomatic envoy, and allow him to be claimed by the Spanish Embassy. It was in consequence of this plan that I made out the papers by which Lucien de Rubempré was released, and revised the minutes of the examinations, washing the prisoners as white as snow.

"To-morrow, Rastignac, Bianchon, and some others are to be confronted with the self-styled Canon of Toledo; they will not recognize him as Jacques Collin who was arrested in their presence ten years since in a cheap boarding-house, where they knew him under the name of Vautrin."

There was a short silence, while Madame Camusot sat thinking.

"Are you sure your man is Jacques Collin?" she asked.

"Positive," said the lawyer, "and so is the public prosecutor."

"Well, then, try to make some exposure at the Palais de Justice without showing your claws too much under your furred cat's paws. If your man is still in the secret cells, go straight to the Governor of the Conciergerie and contrive to have the convict publicly identified. Instead of behaving like a child, act like the ministers of police under despotic governments, who invent conspiracies against the monarch to have the credit of discovering them and making themselves indispensable. Put three families in danger to have the glory of rescuing them."

"That luckily reminds me!" cried Camusot. "My brain is so bewildered that I had quite forgotten an important point. The instructions to place Jacques Collin in a private room were taken by Coquart to Monsieur Gault, the Governor of the prison. Now, Bibi-Lupin, Jacques Collin's great enemy, has taken steps to have three criminals, who know the man, transferred from La Force to the Conciergerie; if he appears in the prison-yard to-morrow, a terrific scene is expected——"

"Why?"

"Jacques Collin, my dear, was treasurer of the money owned by the prisoners in the hulks, amounting to considerable sums; now, he is supposed to have spent it all to maintain the deceased Lucien in luxury, and he will be called to account. There will be such a battle, Bibi-Lupin tells me, as will require the intervention of the warders, and the secret will be out. Jacques Collin's life is in danger.

"Now, if I get to the Palais early enough I may record the evidence of identity."

"Oh, if only his creditors should take him off your hands! You would be thought such a clever fellow!—Do not go to Monsieur de Granville's room; wait for him in his Court with that formidable great gun. It is a loaded cannon turned on the three most important families of the Court and Peerage. Be bold: propose to Monsieur de Granville that he should relieve you of Jacques Collin by transferring him to La Force,

where the convicts know how to deal with those who betray them.

"I will go to the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, who will take me to the Grandlieus. Possibly I may see Monsieur de Sérizy. Trust me to sound the alarm everywhere. Above all, send me a word we will agree upon to let me know if the Spanish priest is officially recognized as Jacques Collin. Get your business at the Palais over by two o'clock, and I will have arranged for you to have an interview with the Keeper of the Seals; perhaps I may find him with the Marquise d'Espard."

Camusot stood squarely with a look of admiration that made his knowing wife smile.

"Now, come to dinner and be cheerful," said she in conclusion. "Why, you see! We have been only two years in Paris, and here you are on the highroad to be made Councillor before the end of the year. From that to the Presidency of a Court, my dear, there is no gulf but what some political service may bridge."

This conjugal sitting shows how greatly the deeds and the lightest words of Jacques Collin, the lowest personage in this drama, involved the honor of the families among whom he had planted his now dead protégé.

At the Conciergerie Lucien's death and Madame de Sérizy's incursion had produced such a block in the wheels of the machinery that the Governor had forgotten to remove the sham priest from his dungeon-cell.

Though more than one instance is on record of the death of a prisoner during his preliminary examination, it was a sufficiently rare event to disturb the warders, the clerk, and the Governor, and hinder their working with their usual serenity. At the same time, to them the important fact was not the handsome young fellow so suddenly become a corpse, but the breakage of the wrought-iron bar of the outer prison gate by the frail hands of a fine lady. And indeed, as soon as the public prosecutor and Comte Octave de Bauvan had gone off with Monsieur de Sérizy and his unconscious wife, the

Governor, clerk, and turnkeys gathered round the gate, after letting out Monsieur Lebrun, the prison doctor, who had been called in to certify to Lucien's death, in concert with the "death doctor" of the district in which the unfortunate youth had been lodging.

In Paris, the "death doctor" is the medical officer whose duty it is in each district to register deaths and certify to their causes.

With the rapid insight for which he was known, Monsieur de Granville had judged it necessary, for the honor of the families concerned, to have the certificate of Lucien's death deposited at the Mairie of the district in which the Quai Malaquais lies, as the deceased had resided there, and to have the body carried from his lodgings to the Church of Saint-Germain des Prés, where the service was to be held. Monsieur de Chargebœuf, Monsieur de Granville's private secretary, had orders to this effect. The body was to be transferred from the prison during the night. The secretary was desired to go at once and settle matters at the Mairie with the parish authorities and with the official undertakers. Thus, to the world in general, Lucien would have died at liberty in his own lodgings, the funeral would start from thence, and his friends would be invited there for the ceremony.

So, when Camusot, his mind at ease, was sitting down to dinner with his ambitious better-half, the Governor of the Conciergerie and Monsieur Lebrun, the prison doctor, were standing outside the gate bewailing the fragility of iron bars and the strength of ladies in love.

"No one knows," said the doctor to Monsieur Gault, "what an amount of nervous force there is in a man wound up to the highest pitch of passion. Dynamics and mathematics have no formulas or symbols to express that power. Why, only yesterday, I witnessed an experiment which gave me a shudder, and which accounts for the terrible physical strength put forth just now by that little woman."

"Tell me about it," said Monsieur Gault, "for I am so foolish as to take an interest in magnetism; I do not believe in it, but it mystifies me."

"A physician who magnetizes—for there are men among us who believe in magnetism," Lebrun went on, "offered to experiment on me in proof of a phenomenon that he described and I doubted. Curious to see with my own eyes one of the strange states of nervous tension by which the existence of magnetism is demonstrated, I consented.

"These are the facts.—I should very much like to know what our College of Medicine would say if each of its members in turn were subjected to this influence, which leaves no loophole for incredulity.

"My old friend—this doctor," said Doctor Lebrun parenthetically, "is an old man persecuted for his opinions since Mesmer's time by all the faculty; he is seventy or seventy-two years of age, and his name is Bouvard. At the present day he is the patriarchal representative of the theory of animal magnetism. This good man regards me as a son; I owe my training to him.—Well, this worthy old Bouvard it was who proposed to prove to me that nerve-force put in motion by the magnetizer was, not indeed infinite, for man is under immutable laws, but a power acting like other powers of nature whose elemental essence escapes our observation.

" 'For instance,' said he, 'if you place your hand in that of a somnambulist who, when awake, can press it only up to a certain average of tightness, you will see that in the somnambulistic state—as it is stupidly termed—his fingers can clutch like a vise screwed up by a blacksmith.'—Well, monsieur, I placed my hand in that of a woman, not asleep, for Bouvard rejects the word, but isolated, and when the old man bid her squeeze my wrist as long and as tightly as she could, I begged him to stop when the blood was almost bursting from my finger tips. Look, you can see the mark of her clutch, which I shall not lose for these three months."

"The deuce!" exclaimed Monsieur Gault, as he saw a band of bruised flesh, looking like the scar of a burn.

"My dear Gault," the doctor went on, "if my wrist had been gripped in an iron manacle screwed tight by a locksmith, I should not have felt the bracelet of metal so hard as that

woman's fingers; her hand was of unyielding steel, and I am convinced that she could have crushed my bones and broken my hand from the wrist. The pressure, beginning almost insensibly, increased without relaxing, fresh force being constantly added to the former grip; a tourniquet could not have been more effectual than that hand used as an instrument of torture.—To me, therefore, it seems proven that under the influence of passion, which is the will concentrated on one point and raised to an incalculable power of animal force, as the different varieties of electric force are also, man may direct his whole vitality, whether for attack or resistance, to one of his organs.—Now, this little lady, under the stress of her despair, had concentrated her vital force in her hands."

"She must have a good deal too, to break a wrought-iron bar," said the chief warder, with a shake of the head.

"There was a flaw in it," Monsieur Gault observed.

"For my part," said the doctor, "I dare assign no limits to nervous force. And indeed it is by this that mothers, to save their children, can magnetize lions, climb, in a fire, along a parapet where a cat would not venture, and endure the torments that sometimes attend childbirth. In this lies the secret of the attempts made by convicts and prisoners to regain their liberty. The extent of our vital energies is as yet unknown; they are part of the energy of nature itself, and we draw them from unknown reservoirs."

"Monsieur," said the warder in an undertone to the Governor, coming close to him as he was escorting Doctor Lebrun as far as the outer gates of the Conciergerie, "Number 2 in the secret cells says he is ill, and needs the doctor; he declares he is dying," added the turnkey.

"Indeed," said the Governor.

"His breath rattles in his throat," replied the man.

"It is five o'clock," said the doctor; "I have had no dinner. But, after all, here I am at hand. Come, let us see."

"Number 2, as it happens, is the Spanish priest suspected of being Jacques Collin," said Monsieur Gault to the doctor, "and one of the persons suspected of the crime in which that poor young man was implicated."

"I saw him this morning," replied the doctor. "Monsieur Camusot sent for me to give evidence as to the state of the rascal's health, and I may assure you that he is perfectly well, and could make a fortune by playing the part of Hercules in a troupe of athletes."

"Perhaps he wants to kill himself too," said Monsieur Gault. "Let us both go down to the cells together, for I ought to go there if only to transfer him to an upper room. Monsieur Camusot has given orders to mitigate this anonymous gentleman's confinement."

Jacques Collin, known as Trompe-la-Mort in the world of the hulks, who must henceforth be called only by his real name, had gone through terrible distress of mind since, after hearing Camusot's order, he had been taken back to the underground cell—an anguish such as he had never before known in the course of a life diversified by many crimes, by three escapes, and two sentences at the Assizes. And is there not something monstrously fine in the dog-like attachment shown to the man he had made his friend by this wretch in whom were concentrated all the life, the powers, the spirit, and the passions of the hulks, who was, so to speak, their highest expression?

Wicked, infamous, and in so many ways horrible, this absolute worship of his idol makes him so truly interesting that this Study, long as it is already, would seem incomplete and cut short if the close of this criminal career did not come as a sequel to Lucien de Rubempré's end. The little spaniel being dead, we want to know whether his terrible playfellow the lion will live on.

In real life, in society, every event is so inevitably linked to other events, that one cannot occur without the rest. The water of the great river forms a sort of fluid floor; not a wave, however rebellious, however high it may toss itself, but its powerful crest must sink to the level of the mass of waters, stronger by the momentum of its course than the revolt of the surges it bears with it.

And just as you watch the current flow, seeing in it a con-

fused sheet of images, so perhaps you would like to measure the pressure exerted by social energy on the vortex called Vautrin; to see how far away the rebellious eddy will be carried ere it is lost, and what the end will be of this really diabolical man, human still by the power of loving—so hardly can that heavenly grace perish, even in the most cankered heart.

This wretched convict, embodying the poem that has smiled on many a poet's fancy—on Moore, on Lord Byron, on Mathurin, on Canalis—the demon who has drawn an angel down to hell to refresh him with dews stolen from heaven,—this Jacques Collin will be seen, by the reader who has understood that iron soul, to have sacrificed his own life for seven years past. His vast powers, absorbed in Lucien, acted solely for Lucien; he lived in his progress, his loves, his ambitions. To him Lucien was his own soul made visible.

It was Trompe-la-Mort who dined with the Grandlieus, stole into ladies' boudoirs, and loved Esther by proxy. In fact, in Lucien he saw Jacques Collin, young, handsome, noble, and rising to the dignity of an ambassador.

Trompe-la-Mort had realized the German superstition of a *doppelganger* by means of a spiritual paternity, a phenomenon which will be quite intelligible to those women who have ever truly loved, who have felt their soul merge in that of the man they adore, who have lived his life, whether noble or infamous, happy or unhappy, obscure or brilliant; who, in defiance of distance, have felt a pain in their leg if he were wounded in his; who if he fought a duel have been aware of it; and who, to put the matter in a nutshell, did not need to be told he was unfaithful to know it.

As he went back to his cell, Jacques Collin said to himself, "The boy is being examined."

And he shivered—he who thought no more of killing a man than a laborer does of drinking.

"Has he been able to see his mistresses?" he wondered. "Has my aunt succeeded in catching those damned females? Have these Duchesses and Countesses bestirred themselves

and prevented his being examined? Has Lucien had my instructions? And if ill-luck will have it that he is cross-questioned, how will he carry it off? Poor boy, and I have brought him to this! It is that rascal Paccard and that sneak Europe who have caused all this rumpus by collaring the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs for the certificate Nucingen gave Esther. That precious pair tripped us up at the last step; but I will make them pay dear for their pranks.

"One day more and Lucien would have been a rich man; he might have married his Clotilde de Grandlieu.—Then the boy would have been all my own!—And to think that our fate depends on a look, on a blush of Lucien's under Camusot's eye, who sees everything, and has all a judge's wits about him! For when he showed me the letters we tipped each other a wink in which we took each other's measure, and he guessed that I can make Lucien's lady-loves fork out."

This soliloquy lasted for three hours. His torments were so great that they were too much for that frame of iron and vitriol; Jacques Collin, whose brain felt on fire with insanity, suffered such fearful thirst that he unconsciously drank up all the water contained in one of the pails with which the cell was supplied, forming, with the bed, all its furniture.

"If he loses his head, what will become of him?—for the poor child has not Théodore's tenacity," said he to himself, as he lay down on the camp-bed—like a bed in a guard-room.

A word must here be said about this Théodore, remembered by Jacques Collin at such a critical moment. Théodore Calvi, a young Corsican, imprisoned for life at the age of eighteen for eleven murders, thanks to influential interference paid for with vast sums, had been made the fellow convict of Jacques Collin, to whom he was chained, in 1819 and 1820. Jacques Collin's last escape, one of his finest inventions—for he had got out disguised as a gendarme leading Théodore Calvi as he was, a convict called before the commissary of police—had been effected in the seaport of Rochefort, where the convicts die by dozens, and where, it was hoped, that these two danger-

ous rascals would have ended their days. Though they escaped together, the difficulties of their flight had forced them to separate. Théodore was caught and restored to the hulks.

After getting to Spain and metamorphosing himself into Don Carlos Herrera, Jacques Collin was on his way to look for his Corsican at Rochefort, when he met Lucien on the banks of the Charente. The hero of the banditti of the Corsican scrub, to whom Trompe-la-Mort owed his knowledge of Italian, was of course sacrificed to the new idol.

Indeed, a life with Lucien, a youth innocent of all crime, who had only minor sins on his conscience, dawned on him as bright and glorious as a summer sun; while with Théodore, Jacques Collin could look forward to no end but the scaffold after a career of indispensable crimes.

The thought of disaster as a result of Lucien's weakness—for his experience of an underground cell would certainly have turned his brain—took vast proportions in Jacques Collin's mind; and, contemplating the probabilities of such a misfortune, the unhappy man felt his eyes fill with tears, a phenomenon that had been utterly unknown to him since his earliest childhood.

"I must be in a furious fever," said he to himself; "and perhaps if I send for the doctor and offer him a handsome sum, he will put me in communication with Lucien."

At this moment the turnkey brought in his dinner.

"It is quite useless, my boy; I cannot eat. Tell the governor of this prison to send the doctor to see me. I am very bad, and I believe my last hour has come."

Hearing the guttural rattle that accompanied these words, the warder bowed and went. Jacques Collin clung wildly to this hope; but when he saw the doctor and the governor come in together, he perceived that the attempt was abortive, and coolly awaited the upshot of the visit, holding out his wrist for the doctor to feel his pulse.

"The Abbé is feverish," said the doctor to Monsieur Gault, "but it is the type of fever we always find in inculpated pris-

oners—and to me," he added, in the governor's ear, "it is always a sign of some degree of guilt."

Just then the governor, to whom the public prosecutor had intrusted Lucien's letter to be given to Jacques Collin, left the doctor and the prisoner together under the guard of the warder, and went to fetch the letter.

"Monsieur," said Jacques Collin, seeing the warder outside the door, and not understanding why the governor had left them, "I should think nothing of thirty thousand francs if I might send five lines to Lucien de Rubempré."

"I will not rob you of your money," said Doctor Lebrun; "no one in this world can ever communicate with him again——"

"No one?" said the prisoner in amazement. "Why?"

"He has hanged himself——"

No tigress robbed of her whelps ever startled an Indian jungle with a yell so fearful as that of Jacques Collin, who rose to his feet as a tiger rears to spring, and fired a glance at the doctor as scorching as the flash of a falling thunderbolt. Then he fell back on the bed, exclaiming:

"Oh, my son!"

"Poor man!" said the doctor, moved by this terrific convulsion of nature.

In fact, the first explosion gave way to such utter collapse, that the words, "Oh, my son," were but a murmur.

"Is this one going to die in our hands too?" said the turnkey.

"No; it is impossible!" Jacques Collin went on, raising himself and looking at the two witnesses of the scene with a dead, cold eye. "You are mistaken; it is not Lucien; you did not see. A man cannot hang himself in one of these cells. Look—how could I hang myself here? All Paris shall answer to me for that boy's life! God owes it to me."

The warder and the doctor were amazed in their turn—they, whom nothing had astonished for many a long day.

On seeing the governor, Jacques Collin, crushed by the very violence of this outburst of grief, seemed somewhat calmer.

"Here is a letter which the public prosecutor placed in my hands for you, with permission to give it you sealed," said Monsieur Gault.

"From Lucien?" said Jacques Collin.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Is not that young man——"

"He is dead," said the governor. "Even if the doctor had been on the spot, he would, unfortunately, have been too late. The young man died—there—in one of the rooms——"

"May I see him with my own eyes?" asked Jacques Collin timidly. "Will you allow a father to weep over the body of his son?"

"You can, if you like, take his room, for I have orders to remove you from these cells; you are no longer in such close confinement, monsieur."

The prisoner's eyes, from which all light and warmth had fled, turned slowly from the governor to the doctor; Jacques Collin was examining them, fearing some trap, and he was afraid to go out of the cell.

"If you wish to see the body," said Lebrun, "you have no time to lose; it is to be carried away to-night."

"If you have children, gentlemen," said Jacques Collin, "you will understand my state of mind; I hardly know what I am doing. This blow is worse to me than death; but you cannot know what I am saying. Even if you are fathers, it is only after a fashion—I am a mother too—I—I am going mad—I feel it!"

By going through certain passages which open only to the governor, it is possible to get very quickly from the cells to the private rooms. The two sets of rooms are divided by an underground corridor formed of two massive walls supporting the vault over which the Galerie Marchande, as it is called, is built. So Jacques Collin, escorted by the warder, who took his arm, preceded by the governor, and followed by the doctor, in a few minutes reached the cell where Lucien was lying stretched on the bed.

On seeing the body, he threw himself upon it, seizing it in

a desperate embrace with a passion and impulse that made these spectators shudder.

"There," said the doctor to Monsieur Gault, "that is an instance of what I was telling you. You see that man clutching the body, and you do not know what a corpse is; it is stone——"

"Leave me alone!" said Jacques Collin in a smothered voice; "I have not long to look at him. They will take him away to——"

He paused at the word "bury him."

"You will allow me to have some relic of my dear boy! Will you be so kind as to cut off a lock of his hair for me, monsieur," he said to the doctor, "for I cannot——"

"He was certainly his son," said Lebrun.

"Do you think so?" replied the governor in a meaning tone, which made the doctor thoughtful for a few minutes.

The governor gave orders that the prisoner was to be left in this cell, and that some locks of hair should be cut for the self-styled father before the body should be removed.

At half-past five in the month of May it is easy to read a letter in the Conciergerie in spite of the iron bars and the close wire trellis that guard the windows. So Jacques Collin read the dreadful letter while he still held Lucien's hand.

The man is not known who can hold a lump of ice for ten minutes tightly clutched in the hollow of his hand. The cold penetrates to the very life-springs with mortal rapidity. But the effect of that cruel chill, acting like a poison, is as nothing to that which strikes to the soul from the cold, rigid hand of the dead thus held. Thus Death speaks to Life; it tells many dark secrets which kill many feelings; for in matters of feeling is not change death?

As we read through once more, with Jacques Collin, Lucien's last letter, it will strike us as being what it was to this man—a cup of poison:—

"To the Abbé Carlos Herrera.

"My dear Abbe,—I have had only benefits from you, and I have betrayed you. This involuntary ingratitude is killing me, and when you read these lines I shall have ceased to exist. You are not here now to save me.

"You had given me full liberty, if I should find it advantageous, to destroy you by flinging you on the ground like a cigar-end; but I have ruined you by a blunder. To escape from a difficulty, deluded by a clever question from the examining judge, your son by adoption and grace went over to the side of those who aim at killing you at any cost, and insist on proving an identity which I know to be impossible, between you and a French villain. All is said.

"Between a man of your calibre and me—me of whom you tried to make a greater man than I am capable of being—no foolish sentiment can come at the moment of final parting. You hoped to make me powerful and famous, and you have thrown me into the gulf of suicide—that is all. I have long heard the broad pinions of that vertigo beating over my head.

"As you have sometimes said, there is the posterity of Cain and the posterity of Abel. In the great human drama Cain is in opposition. You are descended from Adam through that line, in which the devil still fans the fire of which the first spark was flung on Eve. Among the demons of that pedigree, from time to time we see one of stupendous power, summing up every form of human energy, and resembling the fevered beasts of the desert, whose vitality demands the vast spaces they find there. Such men are as dangerous as lions would be in the heart of Normandy; they must have their prey, and they devour common men and crop the money of fools. Their sport is so dangerous, that at last they kill the humble dog whom they have taken for a companion and made an idol of.

"When it is God's will, these mysterious beings may be a Moses, an Attila, Charlemagne, Mahomet, or Napoleon; but when He leaves a generation of these stupendous tools to rust at the bottom of the ocean, they are no more than a Pugat-

scheff, a Fouché, a Louvel, or the Abbé Carlos Herrera. Gifted with immense power over tenderer souls, they entrap them and mangle them. It is grand, it is fine—in its way. It is the poisonous plant with gorgeous coloring that fascinates children in the woods. It is the poetry of evil. Men like you ought to dwell in caves and never come out of them. You have made me live that vast life, and I have had all my share of existence; so I may very well take my head out of the Gordian knot of your policy, and slip it into the running knot of my cravat.

"To repair the mischief I have done you, I am forwarding to the public prosecutor a retraction of my deposition. You will know how to take advantage of this document.

"In virtue of a Will formally drawn up, restitution will be made, Monsieur l'Abbé, of the moneys belonging to your Order which you so imprudently devoted to my use as a result of your paternal affection for me.

"And so farewell. Farewell, colossal image of Evil and Corruption; farewell to you, who, if started on the right road, might have been greater than Ximenes, greater than Richelieu! You have kept your promises. I find myself once more just as I was on the banks of the Charente, after enjoying, by your help, the enchantments of a dream. But, unfortunately, it is not now in the waters of my native place that I shall drown the errors of a boy, but in the Seine, and my hole is a cell in the Conciergerie.

"Do not regret me: my contempt for you is as great as my admiration.

"LUCIEN."

A little before one in the morning, when the men came to fetch away the body, they found Jacques Collin kneeling by the bed, the letter on the floor, dropped, no doubt, as a suicide drops the pistol that has shot him; but the unhappy man still held Lucien's hand between his own, and was praying to God.

On seeing this man, the porters paused for a moment, for he looked like one of those stone images, kneeling to all eter-

nity on a mediæval tomb, the work of some stone-carver's genius. The sham priest, with eyes as bright as a tiger's, but stiffened into supernatural rigidity, so impressed the men that they gently bid him rise.

"Why?" he asked mildly. The audacious Trompe-la-Mort was as meek as a child.

The governor pointed him out to Monsieur de Chargebœuf; and he, respecting such grief, and believing that Jacques Collin was indeed the priest he called himself, explained the orders given by Monsieur de Granville with regard to the funeral service and arrangements, showing that it was absolutely necessary that the body should be transferred to Lucien's lodgings, Quai Malaquais, where the priests were waiting to watch by it for the rest of the night.

"It is worthy of that gentleman's well-known magnanimity," said Jacques Collin sadly. "Tell him, monsieur, that he may rely on my gratitude. Yes, I am in a position to do him great service. Do not forget these words; they are of the utmost importance to him.

"Oh, monsieur! strange changes come over a man's spirit when for seven hours he has wept over such a son as he—— And I shall see him no more!"

After gazing once more at Lucien with an expression of a mother bereft of her child's remains, Jacques Collin sank in a heap. As he saw Lucien's body carried away, he uttered a groan that made the men hurry off. The public prosecutor's private secretary and the governor of the prison had already made their escape from the scene.

What had become of that iron spirit; of the decision which was a match in swiftness for the eye; of the nature in which thought and action flashed forth together like one flame; of the sinews hardened by three spells of labor on the hulks, and by three escapes, the muscles which had acquired the metallic temper of a savage's limbs? Iron will yield to a certain amount of hammering or persistent pressure; its impenetrable molecules, purified and made homogeneous by man, may become disintegrated, and without being in a state of fusion the

metal has lost its power of resistance. Blacksmiths, locksmiths, tool-makers sometimes express this state by saying the iron is *retting,* appropriating a word applied exclusively to hemp, which is reduced to pulp and fibre my maceration. Well, the human soul, or, if you will, the threefold powers of body, heart, and intellect, under certain repeated shocks, get into such a condition as fibrous iron. They too are disintegrated. Science and law and the public seek a thousand causes for the terrible catastrophes on railways caused by the rupture of an iron rail, that of Bellevue being a famous instance; but no one has asked the evidence of the real experts in such matters, the blacksmiths, who all say the same thing, "The iron was stringy!" The danger cannot be foreseen. Metal that has gone soft, and metal that has preserved its tenacity, both look exactly alike.

Priests and examining judges often find great criminals in this state. The awful experiences of the Assize Court and the "last toilet" commonly produce this dissolution of the nervous system, even in the strongest natures. Then confessions are blurted by the most firmly set lips; then the toughest hearts break; and, strange to say, always at the moment when these confessions are useless, when this weakness as of death snatches from the man the mask of innocence which made Justice uneasy—for it always is uneasy when the criminal dies without confessing his crime.

Napoleon went through this collapse of every human power on the field of Waterloo.

At eight in the morning, when the warder of the better cells entered the room where Jacques Collin was confined, he found him pale and calm, like a man who has collected all his strength by sheer determination.

"It is the hour for airing in the prison-yard," said the turnkey; "you have not been out for three days; if you choose to take air and exercise, you may."

Jacques Collin, lost in his absorbing thoughts, and taking no interest in himself, regarding himself as a garment with no body in it, a perfect rag, never suspected the trap laid for

him by Bibi-Lupin, nor the importance attaching to his walk in the prison-yard.

The unhappy man went out mechanically, along the corridor, by the cells built into the magnificent cloisters of the Palace of the Kings, over which is the corridor Saint-Louis, as it is called, leading to the various purlieus of the Court of Appeals. This passage joins that of the better cells; and it is worth noting that the cell in which Louvel was imprisoned, one of the most famous of the regicides, is the room at the right angel formed by the junction of the two corridors. Under the pretty room in the Tour Bonbec there is a spiral staircase leading from the dark passage, and serving the prisoners who are lodged in these cells to go up and down on their way from or to the yard.

Every prisoner, whether committed for trial or already sentenced, and the prisoners under suspicion who have been reprieved from the closest cells—in short, every one in confinement in the Conciergerie takes exercise in this narrow paved courtyard for some hours every day, especially the early hours of summer mornings. This recreation ground, the ante-room to the scaffold or the hulks on one side, on the other still clings to the world through the gendarme, the examining judge, and the Assize Court. It strikes a greater chill perhaps than even the scaffold. The scaffold may be a pedestal to soar to heaven from; but the prison-yard is every infamy on earth concentrated and unavoidable.

Whether at La Force or at Poissy, at Melun, or at Sainte-Pélagie, a prison-yard is a prison-yard. The same details are exactly repeated, all but the color of the walls, their height, and the space enclosed. So this Study of Manners would be false to its name if it did not include an exact description of this Pandemonium of Paris.

Under the mighty vaulting which supports the lower courts and the Court of Appeals there is, close to the fourth arch, a stone slab, used by Saint-Louis, it is said, for the distribution of alms, and doing duty in our day as a counter for the sale of eatables to the prisoners. So as soon as the prison-

yard is open to the prisoners, they gather round this stone table, which displays such dainties as jail-birds desire—brandy, rum, and the like.

The first two archways on that side of the yard, facing the fine Byzantine corridor—the only vestige now of Saint-Louis' elegant palace—form a parlor, where the prisoners and their counsel may meet, to which the prisoners have access through a formidable gateway—a double passage, railed off by enormous bars, within the width of the third archway. This double way is like the temporary passages arranged at the door of a theatre to keep the line on occasions when a great success brings a crowd. This parlor, at the very end of the vast entrance-hall of the Conciergerie, and lighted by loop-holes on the yard side, has lately been opened out towards the back, and the opening filled with glass, so that the interviews of the lawyers with their clients are under supervision. This innovation was made necessary by the too great fascinations brought to bear by pretty women on their counsel. Where will morality stop short? Such precautions are like the ready-made sets of question for self-examination, where pure imaginations are defiled by meditating on unknown and monstrous depravity. In this parlor, too, parents and friends may be allowed by the authorities to meet the prisoners, whether on remand or awaiting their sentence.

The reader may now understand what the prison-yard is to the two hundred prisoners in the Conciergerie: their garden—a garden without trees, beds, or flowers—in short, a prison-yard. The parlor, and the stone of Saint-Louis, where such food and liquor as are allowed are dispensed, are the only possible means of communication with the outer world.

The hour spent in the yard is the only time when the prisoner is in the open air or the society of his kind; in other prisons those who are sentenced for a term are brought together in workshops; but in the Conciergerie no occupation is allowed, excepting in the privileged cells. There the absorbing idea in every mind is the drama of the Assize

Court, since the culprit comes only to be examined or to be sentenced.

This yard is indeed terrible to behold; it cannot be imagined, it must be seen.

In the first place, the assemblage, in a space forty mètres long by thirty wide, of a hundred condemned or suspected criminals, does not constitute the cream of society. These creatures, belonging for the most part to the lowest ranks, are poorly clad; their countenances are base or horrible, for a criminal from the upper sphere of society is, happily, a rare exception. Peculation, forgery, or fradulent bankruptcy, the only crimes that can bring decent folks so low, enjoy the privilege of the better cells, and then the prisoner scarcely ever quits it.

This promenade, bounded by fine but formidable blackened walls, by a cloister divided up into cells, by fortifications on the side towards the quay, by the barred cells of the better class on the north, watched by vigilant warders, and filled with a herd of criminals, all meanly suspicious of each other, is depressing enough in itself; and it becomes terrifying when you find yourself the centre of all those eyes full of hatred, curiosity, and despair, face to face with that degraded crew. Not a gleam of gladness! all is gloom—the place and the men. All is speechless—the walls and men's consciences. To these hapless creatures danger lies everywhere; excepting in the case of an alliance as ominous as the prison where it was formed, they dare not trust each other.

The police, all-pervading, poisons the atmosphere and taints everything, even the hand-grasp of two criminals who have been intimate. A convict who meets his most familiar comrade does not know that he may not have repented and have made a confession to save his life. This absence of confidence, this dread of the *nark,* mars the liberty, already so illusory, of the prison-yard. The "nark" (in French, *le Mouton* or *le coqueur*) is a spy who affects to be sentenced for some serious offence, and whose skill consists in pretending to be a *chum.* The "chum," in thieves' slang, is a skilled

thief, a professional who has cut himself adrift from society, and means to remain a thief all his days, and continues faithful through thick and thin to the laws of the swell-mob.

Crime and madness have a certain resemblance. To see the prisoners of the Conciergerie in the yard, or the madmen in the garden of an asylum, is much the same thing. Prisoners and lunatics walk to and fro, avoiding each other, looking up with more or less strange or vicious glances, according to the mood of the moment, but never cheerful, never grave; they know each other, or they dread each other. The anticipation of their sentence, remorse, and apprehension give all these men exercising, the anxious, furtive look of the insane. Only the most consummate criminals have the audacity that apes the quietude of respectability, the sincerity of a clear conscience.

As men of the better class are few, and shame keeps the few whose crimes have brought them within doors, the frequenters of the prison-yard are for the most part dressed as workmen. Blouses, long and short, and velveteen jackets preponderate. These coarse or dirty garments, harmonizing with the coarse and sinister faces and brutal manner—somewhat subdued, indeed, by the gloomy reflections that weigh on men in prison—everything, to the silence that reigns, contributes to strike terror or disgust into the rare visitor who, by high influence, has obtained the privilege, seldom granted, of going over the Conciergerie.

Just as the sight of an anatomical museum, where foul diseases are represented by wax models, makes the youth who may be taken there more chaste and apt for nobler and purer love, so the sight of the Conciergerie and of the prison-yard, filled with men marked for the hulks or the scaffold or some disgraceful punishment, inspires many, who might not fear that Divine Justice whose voice speaks so loudly to the conscience, with a fear of human justice; and they come out honest men for a long time after.

As the men who were exercising in the prison-yard, when

Trompe-la-Mort appeared there, were to be the actors in a scene of crowning importance in the life of Jacques Collin, it will be well to depict a few of the principal personages of this sinister crowd.

Here, as everywhere when men are thrown together, here, as at school even, force, physical and moral, wins the day. Here, then, as on the hulks, crime stamps the man's rank. Those whose head is doomed are the aristocracy. The prison-yard, as may be supposed, is a school of criminal law, which is far better learned there than at the Hall on the Place du Panthéon.

A never-failing pleasantry is to rehearse the drama of the Assize Court; to elect a president, a jury, a public prosecutor, a counsel, and to go through the whole trial. This hideous farce is played before almost every great trial. At this time a famous case was proceeding in the Criminal Court, that of the dreadful murder committed on the persons of Monsieur and Madame Crottat, the notary's father and mother, retired farmers who, as this horrible business showed, kept eight hundred thousand francs in gold in their house.

One of the men concerned in this double murder was the notorious Dannepont, known as la Pouraille, a released convict, who for five years had eluded the most active search on the part of the police, under the protection of seven or eight different names. This villain's disguises were so perfect, that he had served two years of imprisonment under the name of Delsouq, who was one of his own disciples, and a famous thief, though he never, in any of his achievements, went beyond the jurisdiction of the lower Courts. La Pouraille had committed no less than three murders since his dismissal from the hulks. The certainty that he would be executed, not less than the large fortune he was supposed to have, made this man an object of terror and admiration to his fellow-prisoners; for not a farthing of the stolen money had ever been recovered. Even after the events of July 1830, some persons may remember the terror caused in Paris by this daring crime, worthy to compare in importance with the robbery of medals

from the Public Library; for the unhappy tendency of our age is to make a murder the more interesting in proportion to the greater sum of money secured by it.

La Pouraille, a small, lean, dry man, with a face like a ferret, forty-five years old, and one of the celebrities of the prisons he had successively lived in since the age of nineteen, knew Jacques Collin well; how and why will be seen.

Two other convicts, brought with la Pouraille from La Force within these twenty-four hours, had at once acknowledged and made the whole prison-yard acknowledge the supremacy of this past-master sealed to the scaffold. One of these convicts, a ticket-of-leave man, named Sélérier, *alias* l'Auvergnat, Père Rallcau, and le Rouleur, who in the sphere known to the hulks as the swell-mob was called Fil-de-Soie (or silken thread)—a nickname he owed to the skill with which he slipped through the various perils of the business —was an old ally of Jacques Collin's.

Trompe-la-Mort so keenly suspected Fil-de-Soie of playing a double part, of being at once in the secrets of the swell-mob and a spy paid by the police, that he had supposed him to be the prime mover of his arrest in the Maison Vauquer in 1819 (*Le Père Goriot*). Sélérier, whom we must call Fil-de-Soie, as we shall also call Dannepont la Pouraille, already guilty of evading surveillance, was concerned in certain well-known robberies without bloodshed, which would certainly take him back to the hulks for at least twenty years.

The other convict, named Riganson, and his kept woman, known as la Biffe, were a most formidable couple, members of the swell-mob. Riganson, on very distant terms with the police from his earliest years, was nicknamed le Biffon. Biffon was the male of la Biffe—for nothing is sacred to the swell-mob. These fiends respect nothing, neither the law nor religion, not even natural history, whose solemn nomenclature, it is seen, is parodied by them.

Here a digression is necessary; for Jacques Collin's appearance in the prison-yard in the midst of his foes, as had been so cleverly contrived by Bibi-Lupin and the examining

judge, and the strange scenes to ensue, would be incomprehensible and impossible without some explanation as to the world of thieves and of the hulks, its laws, its manners, and, above all, its language, its hideous figures of speech being indispensable in this portion of my tale.

So, first of all, a few words must be said as to the vocabulary of sharpers, pickpockets, thieves, and murderers, known as Argot, or thieves' cant, which has of late been introduced into literature with so much success that more than one word of that strange lingo is familiar on the rosy lips of ladies, has been heard in gilded boudoirs, and become the delight of princes, who have often proclaimed themselves "done brown" (*floué*)! And it must be owned, to the surprise no doubt of many persons, that no language is more vigorous or more vivid than that of this underground world which, from the beginnings of countries with capitals, has dwelt in cellars and slums, in the third limbo of society everywhere (*le troisième dessous,* as the expressive and vivid slang of the theatres has it). For is not the world a stage? *Le troisième dessous* is the lowest cellar under the stage at the Opera where the machinery is kept and the men stay who work it, whence the footlights are raised, the ghosts, the blue-devils shot up from hell, and so forth.

Every word of this language is a bold metaphor, ingenious or horrible. A man's breeches are his kicks or trucks (*montante,* a word that need not be explained). In this language you do not sleep, you snooze, or doss (*pioncer*—and note how vigorously expressive the word is of the sleep of the hunted, weary, distrustful animal called a thief, which as soon as it is in safety drops—rolls—into the gulf of deep slumber so necessary under the mighty wings of suspicion always hovering over it; a fearful sleep, like that of a wild beast that can sleep, nay, and snore, and yet its ears are alert with caution).

In this idiom everything is savage. The syllables which begin or end the words are harsh and curiously startling. A woman is a trip or a moll (*une largue*). And it is poetical

too: straw is *la plume de Beauce,* a farmyard feather bed. The word midnight is paraphrased by twelve leads striking—it makes one shiver! *Rincer une cambriole* is to "screw the shop," to rifle a room. What a feeble expression is to go to bed in comparison with "to doss" (*piausser,* make a new skin). What picturesque imagery! Work your dominoes (*jouer des dominos*) is to eat; how can men eat with the police at their heels?

And this language is always growing; it keeps pace with civilization, and is enriched with some new expression by every fresh invention. The potato, discovered and introduced by Louis XVI. and Parmentier, was at once dubbed in French slang as the pig's orange (*Orange à Cochons*) [the Irish have called them bog oranges]. Banknotes are invented; the "mob" at once call them Flimsies (*fafiots garotés,* from "Garot," the name of the cashier whose signature they bear). Flimsy! (*fafiot.*) Cannot you hear the rustle of the thin paper? The thousand franc-note is male flimsy (in French), the five hundred franc-note is the female; and convicts will, you may be sure, find some whimsical name for the hundred and two hundred franc-notes.

In 1790 Guillotin invented, with humane intent, the expeditious machine which solved all the difficulties involved in the problem of capital punishment. Convicts and prisoners from the hulks forthwith investigated this contrivance, standing as it did on the monarchical borderland of the old system and the frontier of modern legislation; they instantly gave it the name of *l'Abbaye de Monte-à-Regret.* They looked at the angle formed by the steel blade, and described its action as reaping (*faucher*); and when it is remembered that the hulks are called the meadow (*le prê*), philologists must admire the inventiveness of these horrible *vocables,* as Charles Nodier would have said.

The high antiquity of this kind of slang is also noteworthy. A tenth of the words are of old Romanesque origin, another tenth are the old Gaulish French of Rabelais. *Effondrer,* to thrash a man, to give him what for; *otolondrer,*

to annoy or to "spur" him; *cambrioler,* doing anything in a room; *aubert,* money; *Gironde,* a beauty (the name of a river of Languedoc); *fouillousse,* a pocket—a "cly"—are all French of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The word *affe,* meaning life, is of the highest antiquity. From *affe* anything that disturbs life is called *affres* (a rowing or scolding), hence *affreux,* anything that troubles life.

About a hundred words are derived from the language of Panurge, a name symbolizing the people, for it is derived from two Greek words signifying All-working.

Science is changing the face of the world by constructing railroads. In Argot the train is *le roulant Vif,* the Rattler.

The name given to the head while still on the shoulders —*la Sorbonne*—shows the antiquity of this dialect which is mentioned by very early romance-writers, as Cervantes, the Italian story-tellers, and Aretino. In all ages the moll, the prostitute, the heroine of so many old-world romances, has been the protectress, companion, and comfort of the sharper, the thief, the pickpocket, the area-sneak, and the burglar.

Prostitution and robbery are the male and female forms of protest made by the natural state against the social state. Even philosophers, the innovators of to-day, the humanitarians with the communists and Fourierists in their train, come at last, without knowing it, to the same conclusion—prostitution and theft. The thief does not argue out questions of property, of inheritance, and social responsibility, in sophistical books; he absolutely ignores them. To him theft is appropriating his own. He does not discuss marriage; he does not complain of it; he does not insist, in printed Utopian dreams, on the mutual consent and bond of souls which can never become general; he pairs with a vehemence of which the bonds are constantly riveted by the hammer of necessity. Modern innovators write unctuous theories, long drawn, and nebulous or philanthropical romances; but the thief acts. He is as clear as a fact, as logical as a blow; and then his style!

Another thing worth noting: the world of prostitutes, thieves, and murderers of the galleys and the prisons forms

a population of about sixty to eighty thousand souls, men and women. Such a world is not to be disdained in a picture of modern manners and a literary reproduction of the social body. The law, the gendarmerie, and the police constitute a body almost equal in number; is not that strange? This antagonism of persons perpetually seeking and avoiding each other, and fighting a vast and highly dramatic duel, are what are sketched in this Study. It has been the same thing with thieving and public harlotry as with the stage, the police, the priesthood, and the gendarmerie. In these six walks of life the individual contracts an indelible character. He can no longer be himself. The stigmata of ordination are as immutable as those of the soldier are. And it is the same in other callings which are strongly in opposition, strong contrasts with civilization. These violent, eccentric, singular signs—*sui generis*—are what make the harlot, the robber, the murderer, the ticket-of-leave man, so easily recognizable by their foes, the spy and the police, to whom they are as game to the sportsman: they have a gait, a manner, a complexion, a look, a color, a smell—in short, infallible marks about them. Hence the highly-developed art of disguise which the heroes of the hulks acquire.

One word yet as to the constitution of this world apart, which the abolition of branding, the mitigation of penalties, and the silly leniency of juries are making a threatening evil. In about twenty years Paris will be beleaguered by an army of forty thousand reprieved criminals; the department of the Seine and its fifteen hundred thousand inhabitants being the only place in France where these poor wretches can be hidden. To them Paris is what the virgin forest is to beasts of prey.

The swell-mob, or more exactly, the upper class of thieves, which is the Faubourg Saint-Germain, the aristocracy of the tribe, had, in 1816, after the peace which made life hard for so many men, formed an association called *les grands fanandels*—the Great Pals—consisting of the most noted master-thieves and certain bold spirits at that time bereft of

any means of living. This word pal means brother, friend, and comrade all in one. And these "Great Pals," the cream of the thieving fraternity, for more than twenty years were the Court of Appeal, the Institute of Learning, and the Chamber of Peers of this community. These men all had their private means, with funds in common, and a code of their own. They knew each other, and were pledged to help and succor each other in difficulties. And they were all superior to the tricks or snares of the police, had a charter of their own, passwords and signs of recognition.

From 1815 to 1819 these dukes and peers of the prison world had formed the famous association of the Ten-thousand (see *le Père Goriot*), so styled by reason of an agreement in virtue of which no job was to be undertaken by which less than ten thousand francs could be got.

At that very time, in 1829-30, some memoirs were brought out in which the collective force of this association and the names of the leaders were published by a famous member of the police-force. It was terrifying to find there an army of skilled rogues, male and female; so numerous, so clever, so constantly lucky, that such thieves as Pastourel, Collonge, or Chimaux, men of fifty and sixty, were described as outlaws from society from their earliest years! What a confession of the ineptitude of justice that rogues so old should be at large!

Jacques Collin had been the cashier, not only of the "Ten-thousand," but also of the "Great Pals," the heroes of the hulks. Competent authorities admit that the hulks have always owned large sums. This curious fact is quite conceivable. Stolen goods are never recovered but in very singular cases. The condemned criminal, who can take nothing with him, is obliged to trust somebody's honesty and capacity, and to deposit his money as, in the world of honest folks, money is placed in a bank.

Long ago Bibi-Lupin, now for ten years a chief of the department of Public Safety, had been a member of the aristocracy of "Pals." His treason had resulted from of-

fended pride; he had been constantly set aside in favor of Trompe-la-Mort's superior intelligence and prodigious strength. Hence his persistent vindictiveness against Jacques Collin. Hence, also, certain compromises between Bibi-Lupin and his old companions, which the magistrates were beginning to take seriously.

So in his desire for vengeance, to which the examining judge had given play under the necessity of identifying Jacques Collin, the chief of the "Safety" had very skilfully chosen his allies by setting la Pouraille, Fil-de-Soie, and le Biffon on the sham Spaniard—for la Pouraille and Fil-de-Soie both belonged to the "Ten-thousand," and le Biffon was a "Great Pal."

La Biffe, le Biffon's formidable trip, who to this day evades all the pursuit of the police by her skill in disguising herself as a lady, was at liberty. This woman, who successfully apes a marquise, a countess, a baroness, keeps a carriage and men-servants. This Jacques Collin in petticoats is the only woman who can compare with Asie, Jacques Collin's right hand. And, in fact, every hero of the hulks is backed up by a devoted woman. Prison records and the secret papers of the law courts will tell you this; no honest woman's love, not even that of a bigot for her spiritual director, has ever been greater than the attachment of a mistress who shares the dangers of a great criminal.

With these men a passion is almost always the first cause of their daring enterprises and murders. The excessive love which—constitutionally, as the doctors say—makes woman irresistible to them, calls every moral and physical force of these powerful natures into action. Hence the idleness which consumes their days, for excesses of passion necessitate sleep and restorative food. Hence their loathing of all work, driving these creatures to have recourse to rapid ways of getting money. And yet, the need of a living, and of high living, violent as it is, is but a trifle in comparison with the extravagance to which these generous Médors are prompted by the mistress to whom they want to give jewels and dress,

and who—always greedy—love rich food. The baggage wants a shawl, the lover steals it, and the woman sees in this a proof of love.

This is how robbery begins; and robbery, if we examine the human soul through a lens, will be seen to be an almost natural instinct in man.

Robbery leads to murder, and murder leads the lover step by step to the scaffold.

Ill-regulated physical desire is therefore, in these men, if we may believe the medical faculty, at the root of seven-tenths of the crimes committed. And, indeed, the proof is always found, evident, palpable at the *post-mortem* examination of the criminal after his execution. And these monstrous lovers, the scarecrows of society, are adored by their mistresses. It is this female devotion, squatting faithfully at the prison gate, always eagerly balking the cunning of the examiner, and incorruptibly keeping the darkest secrets which make so many trials impenetrable mysteries.

In this, again, lies the strength as well as the weakness of the accused. In the vocabulary of a prostitute, to be honest means to break none of the laws of this attachment, to give all her money to the man who is *nabbed,* to look after his comforts, to be faithful to him in every way, to undertake anything for his sake. The bitterest insult one of these women can fling in the teeth of another wretched creature is to accuse her of infidelity to a lover *in quod* (in prison). In that case such a woman is considered to have no heart.

La Pouraille was passionately in love with a woman, as will be seen.

Fil-de-Soie, an egotistical philosopher, who thieved to provide for the future, was a good deal like Paccard, Jacques Collin's satellite, who had fled with Prudence Servien and the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs between them. He had no attachment, he contemned women, and loved no one but Fil-de-Soie.

As to le Biffon, he derived his nickname from his connection with la Biffe. (La Biffe is scavenging, rag-picking.)

And these three distinguished members of *la haute pègre,* the aristocracy of roguery, had a reckoning to demand of Jacques Collin, accounts that were somewhat hard to bring to book.

No one but the cashier could know how many of his clients were still alive, and what each man's share would be. The mortality to which the depositors were peculiarly liable had formed a basis for Trompe-la-Mort's calculations when he resolved to embezzle the funds for Lucien's benefit. By keeping himself out of the way of the police and of his pals for nine years, Jacques Collin was almost certain to have fallen heir, by the terms of agreement among the associates, to two-thirds of the depositors. Besides, could he not plead that he had repaid the pals who had been scragged? In fact, no one had any hold over these *Great Pals.* His comrades trusted him by compulsion, for the hunted life led by convicts necessitates the most delicate confidence between the gentry of this crew of savages. So Jacques Collin, a defaulter for a hundred thousand crowns, might now possibly be quit for a hundred thousand francs. At this moment, as we see, la Pouraille, one of Jacques Collin's creditors, had but ninety days to live. And la Pouraille, the possessor of a sum vastly greater, no doubt, than that placed in his pal's keeping, would probably prove easy to deal with.

One of the infallible signs by which prison governors and their agents, the police and warders, recognize old stagers (*chevaux de retour*), that is to say, men who have already *eaten beans* (*les gourganes,* a kind of haricots provided for prison fare), is their familiarity with prison ways; those who have been *in* before, of course, know the manners and customs; they are at home, and nothing surprises them.

And Jacques Collin, thoroughly on his guard, had, until now, played his part to admiration as an innocent man and stranger, both at La Force and at the Conciergerie. But now, broken by grief, and by two deaths—for he had died twice over during that dreadful night—he was Jacques Collin

once more. The warder was astounded to find that the Spanish priest needed no telling as to the way to the prison-yard. The perfect actor forgot his part; he went down the corkscrew stairs in the Tour Bonbec as one who knew the Conciergerie.

"Bibi-Lupin is right," said the turnkey to himself; "he is an old stager; he is Jacques Collin."

At the moment when Trompe-la-Mort appeared in the sort of frame to his figure made by the door into the tower, the prisoners, having made their purchases at the stone table called after Saint-Louis, were scattered about the yard, always too small for their number. So the newcomer was seen by all of them at once, and all the more promptly, because nothing can compare for keenness with the eye of a prisoner, who in a prison-yard feels like a spider watching in its web. And this comparison is mathematically exact; for the range of vision being limited on all sides by high dark walls, the prisoners can always see, even without looking at them, the doors through which the warders come and go, the windows of the parlor, and the stairs of the Tour Bonbec—the only exits from the yard. In this utter isolation every trivial incident is an event, everything is interesting; the tedium—a tedium like that of a tiger in a cage—increases their alertness tenfold.

It is necessary to note that Jacques Collin, dressed like a priest who is not strict as to costume, wore black knee breeches, black stockings, shoes with silver buckles, a black waistcoat, and a long coat of dark-brown cloth of a certain cut that betrays the priest whatever he may do, especially when these details are completed by a characteristic style of hair-cutting. Jacques Collin's wig was eminently ecclesiastical, and wonderfully natural.

"Hallo!" said la Pouraille to le Biffon, "that's a bad sign! A rook! (*sanglier,* a priest). How did he come here?"

"He is one of their 'narks'" (*trucs,* spies) "of a new make," replied Fil-de-Soie, "some runner with the bracelets" (*marchand de lacets*—equivalent to a Bow Street runner) "looking out for his man."

The gendarme boasts of many names in French slang; when he is after a thief, he is "the man with the *bracelets*" (*marchand de lacets*); when he has him in charge, he is a bird of ill-omen (*hirondelle de la Grève*); when he escorts him to the scaffold, he is "groom to the guillotine" (*hussard de la guillotine*).

To complete our study of the prison-yard, two more of the prisoners must be hastily sketched in. Sélérier, *alias* l'Auvergnat, *alias* le Père Ralleau, called le Rouleur, *alias* Fil-de-Soie—he had thirty names, and as many passports—will henceforth be spoken of by this name only, as he was called by no other among the swell-mob. This profound philosopher, who saw a spy in the sham priest, was a brawny fellow of about five feet eight, whose muscles were all marked by strange bosses. He had an enormous head in which a pair of half-closed eyes sparkled like fire—the eyes of a bird of prey, with gray, dull, skinny eyelids. At a first glance his face resembled that of a wolf, his jaws were so broad, powerful, and prominent; but the cruelty and even ferocity suggested by this likeness were counterbalanced by the cunning and eagerness of his face, though it was scarred by the small-pox. The margin of each scar being sharply cut, gave a sort of wit to his expression; it was seamed with ironies. The life of a criminal—a life of hunger and thirst, of nights spent bivouacking on the quays and river banks, on bridges and streets, and the orgies of strong drink by which successes are celebrated—had laid, as it were, a varnish over these features. Fil-de-Soie, if seen in his undisguised person, would have been marked by any constable or gendarme as his prey; but he was a match for Jacques Collin in the arts of make-up and dress. Just now Fil-de-Soie, in undress, like a great actor who is well got up only on the stage, wore a sort of shooting jacket bereft of buttons, and whose ripped button-holes showed the white lining, squalid green slippers, nankin trousers now a dingy gray, and on his head a cap without a peak, under which an old bandana was tied, streaky with rents, and washed out.

Le Biffon was a complete contrast to Fil-de-Soie. This famous robber, short, burly, and fat, but active, with a livid complexion, and deep-set black eyes, dressed like a cook, standing squarely on very bandy legs, was alarming to behold, for in his countenance all the features predominated that are most typical of the carnivorous beast.

Fil-de-Soie and le Biffon were always wheedling la Pouraille, who had lost all hope. The murderer knew that he would be tried, sentenced, and executed within four months. Indeed, Fil-de-Soie and le Biffon, la Pouraille's chums, never called him anything but *le Chanoine de l'Abbaye de Monte-à-Regret* (a grim paraphrase for a man condemned to the guillotine). It is easy to understand why Fil-de-Soie and le Biffon should fawn on la Pouraille. The man had somewhere hidden two hundred and fifty thousand francs in gold, his share of the spoil fund in the house of the Crottats, the "victims," in newspaper phrase. What a splendid fortune to leave to two pals, though the two old stagers would be sent back to the galleys within a few days! Le Biffon and Fil-de-Soie would be sentenced for a term of fifteen years for robbery with violence, without prejudice to the ten years' penal servitude on a former sentence, which they had taken the liberty of cutting short. So, though one had twenty-two and the other twenty-six years of imprisonment to look forward to, they both hoped to escape, and come back to find la Pouraille's mine of gold.

But the "Ten-thousand man" kept his secret; he did not see the use of telling it before he was sentenced. He belonged to the "upper ten" of the hulks, and had never betrayed his accomplices. His temper was well known; Monsieur Popinot, who had examined him, had not been able to get anything out of him.

This terrible trio were at the further end of the prison-yard, that is to say, near the better class of cells. Fil-de-Soie was giving a lecture to a young man who was *in* for his first offence, and who, being certain of ten years' penal servitude, was gaining information as to the various convict establishments.

"Well, my boy," Fil-de-Soie was saying sententiously as Jacques Collin appeared on the scene, "the difference between Brest, Toulon, and Rochefort is——"

"Well, old cock?" said the lad, with the curiosity of a novice.

This prisoner, a man of good family, accused of forgery, had come down from the cell next to that where Lucien had been.

"My son," Fil-de-Soie went on, "at Brest you are sure to get some beans at the third turn if you dip your spoon in the bowl; at Toulon you never get any till the fifth; and at Rochefort you get none at all, unless you are an old hand."

Having spoken, the philosopher joined le Biffon and la Pouraille, and all three, greatly puzzled by the priest, walked down the yard, while Jacques Collin, lost in grief, came up it. Trompe-la-Mort, absorbed in terrible meditations, the meditations of a fallen emperor, did not think of himself as the centre of observation, the object of general attention, and he walked slowly, gazing at the fatal window where Lucien had hanged himself. None of the prisoners knew of this catastrophe, since, for reasons to be presently explained, the young forger had not mentioned the subject. The three pals agreed to cross the priest's path.

"He is no priest," said Fil-de-Soie; "he is an old stager. Look how he drags his right foot."

It is needful to explain here—for not every reader has had a fancy to visit the galleys—that each convict is chained to another, an old one and a young one always as a couple; the weight of this chain riveted to a ring above the ankle is so great as to induce a limp, which the convict never loses. Being obliged to exert one leg much more than the other to drag this fetter (*manicle* is the slang name for such irons), the prisoner inevitably gets into the habit of making the effort. Afterwards, though he no longer wears the chain, it acts upon him still; as a man still feels an amputated leg, the convict is always conscious of the anklet, and can never get over that trick of walking. In police slang, he "drags his

right." And this sign, as well known to convicts among themselves as it is to the police, even if it does not help to identify a comrade, at any rate confirms recognition.

In Trompe-la-Mort, who had escaped eight years since, this trick had to a great extent worn off; but just now, lost in reflections, he walked at such a slow and solemn pace that, slight as the limp was, it was strikingly evident to so practised an eye as la Pouraille's. And it is quite intelligible that convicts, always thrown together, as they must be, and never having any one else to study, will so thoroughly have watched each other's faces and appearance, that certain tricks will have impressed them which may escape their systematic foes—spies, gendarmes, and police-inspectors.

Thus it was a peculiar twitch of the maxillary muscles of the left cheek, recognized by a convict who was sent to a review of the Legion of the Seine, which led to the arrest of the lieutenant-colonel of that corps, the famous Coignard; for, in spite of Bibi-Lupin's confidence, the police could not dare believe that the Comte Pontis de Sainte-Hélène and Coignard were one and the same man.

"He is our boss!" (*dâb* or master,) said Fil-de-Soie, seeing in Jacques Collin's eye the vague glance a man sunk in despair casts on all his surroundings.

"By Jingo! Yes, it is Trompe-la-Mort," said le Biffon, rubbing his hands. "Yes, it is his cut, his build; but what has he done to himself? He looks quite different."

"I know what he is up to!" cried Fil-de-Soie; "he has some plan in his head. He wants to see the boy" (*sa tante*) "who is to be executed before long."

The persons known in prison slang as *tantes* or *aunts* may be best described in the ingenious words of the governor of one of the great prisons to the late Lord Durham, who, during his stay in Paris, visited every prison. So curious was he to see every detail of French justice, that he even persuaded Sanson, at that time the executioner, to erect the scaffold and decapitate a living calf, that he might thoroughly understand the working of the machine made famous by the

Revolution. The governor having shown him everything—the yards, the workshops, and the underground cells—pointed to a part of the building, and said, "I need not take your Lordship there; it is the *quartier des tantes.*"—"Oh," said Lord Durham, "what are they!"—"The third sex, my Lord."

"And they are going to scrag Théodore!" said la Pouraille, "such a pretty boy! And such a light hand! such cheek! What a loss to society!"

"Yes, Théodore Calvi is yamming his last meal," said le Biffon. "His trips will pipe their eyes, for the little beggar was a great pet."

"So you're here, old chap?" said la Pouraille to Jacques Collin. And, arm-in-arm with his two acolytes, he barred the way to the new arrival. "Why, Boss, have you got yourself japanned?" he went on.

"I hear you have nobbled our pile" (stolen our money), le Biffon added, in a threatening tone.

"You have just got to stump up the tin?" said Fil-de-Soie.

The three questions were fired at him like three pistol-shots.

"Do not make game of an unhappy priest sent here by mistake," Jacques Collin replied mechanically, recognizing his three comrades.

"That is the sound of his pipe, if it is not quite the cut of his mug," said la Pouraille, laying his hand on Jacques Collin's shoulder.

This action, and the sight of his three chums, startled the "Boss" out of his dejection, and brought him back to a consciousness of reality; for during that dreadful night he had lost himself in the infinite spiritual world of feeling, seeking some new road.

"Do not blow the gaff on your Boss!" said Jacques Collin in a hollow threatening tone, not unlike the low growl of a lion. "The reelers are here; let them make fools of themselves. I am faking to help a pall who is awfully down on his luck."

He spoke with the unction of a priest trying to convert the wretched, and a look which flashed round the yard, took in the warders under the archways, and pointed them out with a wink to his three companions.

"Are there not narks about? Keep your peepers open and a sharp outlook. Don't know me, Nanty parnarly, and soap me down for a priest, or I will do for you all, you and your molls and your blunt."

"What, do you funk our blabbing?" said Fil-de-Soie. "Have you come to help your boy to guy?"

"Madeleine is getting ready to be turned off in the Square" (the Place de Grève), said la Pouraille.

"Théodore!" said Jacques Collin, repressing a start and a cry.

"They will have his nut off," la Pouraille went on; "he was booked for the scaffold two months ago."

Jacques Collin felt sick, his knees almost failed him; but his three comrades held him up, and he had the presence of mind to clasp his hands with an expression of contrition. La Pouraille and le Biffon respectfully supported the sacrilegious Trompe-la-Mort, while Fil-de-Soie ran to a warder on guard at the gate leading to the parlor.

"That venerable priest wants to sit down; send out a chair for him," said he.

And so Bibi-Lupin's plot had failed.

Trompe-la-Mort, like a Napoleon recognized by his soldiers, had won the submission and respect of the three felons. Two words had done it. Your molls and your blunt —your women and your money—epitomizing every true affection of man. This threat was to the three convicts an indication of supreme power. The Boss still had their fortune in his hands. Still omnipotent outside the prison, their Boss had not betrayed them, as the false pals said.

Their chief's immense reputation for skill and inventiveness stimulated their curiosity; for, in prison, curiosity is the only goad of these blighted spirits. And Jacques Collin's daring disguise, kept up even under the bolts and locks of the Conciergerie, dazzled the three felons.

"I have been in close confinement for four days and did not know that Théodore was so near the *Abbaye,*" said Jacques Collin. "I came in to save a poor little chap who scragged himself here yesterday at four o'clock, and now here is another misfortune. I have not an ace in my hand——"

"Poor old boy!" said Fil-de-Soie.

"Old Scratch has cut me!" cried Jacques Collin, tearing himself free from his supporters, and drawing himself up with a fierce look. "There comes a time when the world is too many for us! The beaks gobble us up at last."

The governor of the Conciergerie, informed of the Spanish priest's weak state, came himself to the prison-yard to observe him; he made him sit down on a chair in the sun, studying him with the keen acumen which increases day by day in the practise of such functions, though hidden under an appearance of indifference.

"Oh! Heaven!" cried Jacques Collin. "To be mixed up with such creatures, the dregs of society—felons and murderers!—But God will not desert His servant! My dear sir, my stay here shall be marked by deeds of charity which shall live in men's memories. I will convert these unhappy creatures, they shall learn they have souls, that life eternal awaits them, and that though they have lost all on earth, they still may win heaven—Heaven which they may purchase by true and genuine repentance."

Twenty or thirty prisoners had gathered in a group behind the three terrible convicts, whose ferocious looks had kept a space of three feet between them and their inquisitive companions, and they heard this address, spoken with evangelical unction.

"Ay, Monsieur Gault," said the formidable la Pouraille, "we will listen to what this one may say——"

"I have been told," Jacques Collin went on, "that there is in this prison a man condemned to death."

"The rejection of his appeal is at this moment being read to him," said Monsieur Gault.

"I do not know what that means," said Jacques Collin, artlessly looking about him.

"Golly, what a flat!" said the young fellow, who, a few minutes since, had asked Fil-de-Soie about the beans on the hulks.

"Why, it means that he is to be scragged to-day or to-morrow."

"Scragged?" asked Jacques Collin, whose air of innocence and ignorance filled his three pals with admiration.

"In their slang," said the governor, "that means that he will suffer the penalty of death. If the clerk is reading the appeal, the executioner will no doubt have orders for the execution. The unhappy man has persistently refused the offices of the chaplain."

"Ah! Monsieur le Directeur, this is a soul to save!" cried Jacques Collin, and the sacrilegious wretch clasped his hands with the expression of a despairing lover, which to the watchful governor seemed nothing less than divine fervor. "Ah, monsieur," Trompe-la-Mort went on, "let me prove to you what I am, and how much I can do, by allowing me to incite that hardened heart to repentance. God has given me a power of speech which produces great changes. I crush men's hearts; I open them.—What are you afraid of? Send me with an escort of gendarmes, of turnkeys—whom you will."

"I will inquire whether the prison chaplain will allow you to take his place," said Monsieur Gault.

And the governor withdrew, struck by the expression, perfectly indifferent, though inquisitive, with which the convicts and the prisoners on remand stared at this priest, whose unctuous tones lent a charm to his half-French, half-Spanish lingo.

"How did you come in here, Monsieur l'Abbé?" asked the youth who had questioned Fil-de-Soie.

"Oh, by a mistake!" replied Jacques Collin, eyeing the young gentleman from head to foot. "I was found in the house of a courtesan who had died, and was immediately robbed. It was proved that she had killed herself, and the thieves—probably the servants—have not yet been caught."

"And it was for that theft that your young man hanged himself?"

"The poor boy, no doubt, could not endure the thought of being blighted by his unjust imprisonment," said Trompe-la-Mort, raising his eyes to heaven.

"Ay," said the young man; "they were coming to set him free just when he had killed himself. What bad luck!"

"Only innocent souls can be thus worked on by their imagination," said Jacques Collin. "For, observe, he was the loser by the theft."

"How much money was it?" asked Fil-de-Soie, the deep and cunning.

"Seven hundred and fifty thousand francs," said Jacques Collin blandly.

The three convicts looked at each other and withdrew from the group that had gathered round the sham priest.

"He screwed the moll's place himself!" said Fil-de-Soie in a whisper to le Biffon, "and they want to put us in a blue funk for our cartwheels" (*thunes de balles,* five-franc pieces).

"He will always be the boss of the swells," replied la Pouraille. "Our pieces are safe enough."

La Pouraille, wishing to find some man he could trust, had an interest in considering Jacques Collin an honest man. And in prison, of all places, a man believes what he hopes.

"I lay you anything, he will come round the big Boss and save his chum!" said Fil-de-Soie.

"It he does that," said le Biffon, "though I don't believe he is really God, he must certainly have smoked a pipe with old Scratch, as they say."

"Didn't you hear him say, 'Old Scratch has cut me'?" said Fil-de-Soie.

"Oh!" cried la Pouraille, "if only he would save my nut, what a time I would have with my whack of the shiners and the yellow boys I have stowed."

"Do what he bids you!" said Fil-de-Soie.

"You don't say so?" retorted la Pouraille, looking at his pal.

"What a flat you are! You will be booked for the

Abbaye!" said le Biffon. "You have no other door to budge, if you want to keep on your pins, to yam, wet your whistle, and fake to the end; you must take his orders."

"That's all right," said la Pouraille. "There is not one of us that will blow the gaff, or if he does, I will take him where I am going——"

"And he'll do it too," cried Fil-de-Soie.

The least sympathetic reader, who has no pity for this strange race, may conceive of the state of mind of Jacques Collin, finding himself between the dead body of the idol whom he had been bewailing during five hours that night, and the imminent end of his former comrade—the dead body of Théodore, the young Corsican. Only to see the boy would demand extraordinary cleverness; to save him would need a miracle; but he was thinking of it.

For the better comprehension of what Jacques Collin proposed to attempt, it must here be remarked that murderers and thieves, all the men who people the galleys, are not so formidable as is generally supposed. With a few rare exceptions these creatures are all cowards, in consequence, no doubt, of the constant alarms which weigh on their spirit. The faculties being perpetually on the stretch in thieving, and the success of a stroke of business depending on the exertion of every vital force, with a readiness of wit to match their dexterity of hand, and an alertness which exhausts the nervous system; these violent exertions of will once over, they become stupid, just as a singer or a dancer drops quite exhausted after a fatiguing *pas seul,* or one of those tremendous duets which modern composers inflict on the public.

Malefactors are, in fact, so entirely bereft of common sense, or so much oppressed by fear, that they become absolutely childish. Credulous to the last degree, they are caught by the bird-lime of the simplest snare. When they have done a successful *job,* they are in such a state of prostration that they immediately rush into the debaucheries they crave for; they get drunk on wine and spirits, and throw themselves

madly into the arms of their women to recover composure by dint of exhausting their strength, and to forget their crime by forgetting their reason.

Then they are at the mercy of the police. When once they are in custody they lose their head, and long for hope so blindly that they believe anything; indeed, there is nothing too absurd for them to accept it. An instance will suffice to show how far the simplicity of a criminal who has been *nabbed* will carry him. Bibi-Lupin, not long before, had extracted a confession from a murderer of nineteen by making him believe that no one under age was ever executed. When this lad was transferred to the Conciergerie to be sentenced after the rejection of his appeal, this terrible man came to see him.

"Are you sure you are not yet twenty?" said he.

"Yes, I am only nineteen and a half."

"Well, then," replied Bibi-Lupin, "you may be quite sure of one thing—you will never see twenty."

"Why?"

"Because you will be scragged within three days," replied the police agent.

The murderer, who had believed, even after sentence was passed, that a minor would never be executed, collapsed like an *omelette soufflée.*

Such men, cruel only from the necessity for suppressive evidence, for they murder only to get rid of witnesses (and this is one of the arguments adduced by those who desire the abrogation of capital punishment),—these giants of dexterity and skill, whose sleight of hand, whose rapid sight, whose every sense is as alert as that of a savage, are heroes of evil only on the stage of their exploits. Not only do their difficulties begin as soon as the crime is committed, for they are as much bewildered by the need for concealing the stolen goods as they were depressed by necessity—but they are as weak as a woman in childbed. The vehemence of their schemes is terrific; in success they become like children. In a word, their nature is that of the wild beast—easy to kill

when it is full fed. In prison these strange beings are men in dissimulation and in secretiveness, which never yields till the last moment, when they are crushed and broken by the tedium of imprisonment.

It may hence be understood how it was that the three convicts, instead of betraying their chief, were eager to serve him; and as they suspected he was now the owner of the stolen seven hundred and fifty thousand francs, they admired him for his calm resignation, under bolt and bar of the Conciergerie, believing him capable of protecting them all.

When Monsieur Gault left the sham priest, he returned through the parlor to his office, and went in search of Bibi-Lupin, who for twenty minutes, since Jacques Collin had gone downstairs, had been on the watch with his eye at a peep-hole in a window looking out on the prison-yard.

"Not one of them recognized him," said Monsieur Gault, "and Napolitas, who is on duty, did not hear a word. The poor priest all through the night, in his deep distress, did not say a word which could imply that his gown covers Jacques Collin."

"That shows that he is used to prison life," said the police agent.

Napolitas, Bibi-Lupin's secretary, being unknown to the criminals then in the Conciergerie, was playing the part of the young gentleman imprisoned for forgery.

"Well, but he wishes to be allowed to hear the confession of the young fellow who is sentenced to death," said the governor.

"To be sure! That is our last chance," cried Bibi-Lupin. "I had forgotten that. Théodore Calvi, the young Corsican, was the man chained to Jacques Collin; they say that on the bulks Jacques Collin made him famous pads——"

The convicts on the galleys contrive a kind of pad to slip between their skin and the fetters to deaden the pressure of the iron ring on their ankles and instep; these pads, made of tow and rags, are known as *patarasses*.

"Who is warder over the man?" asked Bibi-Lupin.

"Cœur la Virole."

"Very well; I will go and make up as a gendarme, and be on the watch; I shall hear what they say. I will be even with them."

"But if it should be Jacques Collin are you not afraid of his recognizing you and throttling you?" said the governor to Bibi-Lupin.

"As a gendarme I shall have my sword," replied the other; "and, besides, if he is Jacques Collin, he will never do anything that will risk his neck; and if he is a priest, I shall be safe."

"Then you have no time to lose," said Monsieur Gault; "it is half-past eight. Father Sauteloup has just read the reply to his appeal, and Monsieur Sanson is waiting in the order room."

"Yes, it is to-day's job, the 'widows' huzzars'" (*les hussards de la veuve,* another horrible name for the functionaries of the guillotine) "are ordered out," replied Bibi-Lupin. "Still, I cannot wonder that the prosecutor-general should hesitate; the boy has always declared that he is innocent, and there is, in my opinion, no conclusive evidence against him."

"He is a thorough Coriscan," said Monsieur Gault; "he has not said a word, and has held firm all through."

The last words of the governor of the prison summed up the dismal tale of a man condemned to die. A man cut off from among the living by law belongs to the Bench. The Bench is paramount; it is answerable to nobody, it obeys its own conscience. The prison belongs to the Bench, which controls it absolutely. Poetry has taken possession of this social theme, "the man condemned to death"—a subject truly apt to strike the imagination! And poetry has been sublime on it. Prose has no resource but fact; still, the fact is appalling enough to hold its own against verse. The existence of a condemned man who has not confessed his crime, or betrayed his accomplices, is one of fearful torment. This is no case of iron boots, of water poured into the stomach, or of limbs

racked by hideous machinery; it is hidden and, so to speak, negative torture. The condemned wretch is given over to himself with a companion whom he cannot but distrust.

The amiability of modern philanthropy fancies it has understood the dreadful torment of isolation, but this is a mistake. Since the abolition of torture, the Bench, in a natural anxiety to reassure the too sensitive consciences of the jury, had guessed what a terrible auxiliary isolation would prove to justice in seconding remorse.

Solitude is void; and nature has as great a horror of a moral void as she has of a physical vacuum. Solitude is habitable only to a man of genius who can people it with ideas, the children of the spiritual world; or to one who contemplates the works of the Creator, to whom it is bright with the light of heaven, alive with the breath and voice of God. Excepting for these two beings—so near to Paradise—solitude is to the mind what torture is to the body. Between solitude and the torture-chamber there is all the difference that there is between a nervous malady and a surgical disease. It is suffering multiplied by infinitude. The body borders on the infinite through its nerves, as the spirit does through thought. And, in fact, in the annals of the Paris law courts the criminals who do not confess can be easily counted.

This terrible situation, which in some cases assumes appalling importance—in politics, for instance, when a dynasty or a state is involved—will find a place in the HUMAN COMEDY. But here a description of the stone box in which, after the Restoration, the law shut up a man condemned to death in Paris, may serve to give an idea of the terrors of a felon's last day on earth.

Before the Revolution of July there was in the Conciergerie, and indeed there still is, a condemned cell. This room, backing on the governor's office, is divided from it by a thick wall in strong masonry, and the other side of it is formed by a wall seven or eight feet thick, which supports one end of the immense Salle des Pas-Perdus. It is entered through the first door in the long dark passage in which the

eye loses itself when looking from the middle of the vaulted gateway. This ill-omened room is lighted by a funnel, barred by a formidable grating, and hardly perceptible on going into the Conciergerie yard, for it has been pierced in the narrow space between the office window close to the railing of the gateway, and the place where the office clerk sits—a den like a cupboard contrived by the architect at the end of the entrance court.

This position accounts for the fact that the room thus enclosed between four immensely thick walls should have been devoted, when the Conciergerie was reconstituted, to this terrible and funereal service. Escape is impossible. The passage, leading to the cells for solitary confinement and to the women's quarters, faces the stove where gendarmes and warders are always collected together. The air-hole, the only outlet to the open air, is nine feet above the floor, and looks out on the first court, which is guarded by sentries at the outer gate. No human power can make any impression on the walls. Besides, a man sentenced to death is at once secured in a straitwaistcoat, a garment which precludes all use of the hands; he is chained by one foot to his camp bed, and he has a fellow prisoner to watch and attend on him. The room is paved with thick flags, and the light is so dim that it is hard to see anything.

It is impossible not to feel chilled to the marrow on going in, even now, though for sixteen years the cell has never been used, in consequence of the changes effected in Paris in the treatment of criminals under sentence. Imagine the guilty man there with his remorse for company, in silence and darkness, two elements of horror, and you will wonder how he ever failed to go mad. What a nature must that be whose temper can resist such treatment, with the added misery of enforced idleness and inaction.

And yet Théodore Calvi, a Corsican, now twenty-seven years of age, muffled, as it were, in a shroud of absolute reserve, had for two months held out against the effects of this dungeon and the insidious chatter of the prisoner placed to entrap him.

These were the strange circumstances under which the Corsican had been condemned to death. Though the case is a very curious one, our account of it must be brief. It is impossible to introduce a long digression at the climax of a narrative already so much prolonged, since its only interest is in so far as it concerns Jacques Collin, the vertebral column, so to speak, which, by its sinister persistency, connects *Le Père Goriot* with *Illusions perdues,* and *Illusions perdues* with this Study. And, indeed, the reader's imagination will be able to work out the obscure case which at this moment was causing great uneasiness to the jury of the sessions, before whom Théodore Calvi had been tried For a whole week, since the criminal's appeal had been rejected by the Supreme Court, Monsieur de Granville had been worrying himself over the case, and postponing from day to day the order for carrying out the sentence, so anxious was he to reassure the jury by announcing that on the threshold of death the accused had confessed the crime.

A poor widow of Nanterre, whose dwelling stood apart from the township, which is situated in the midst of the infertile plain lying between Mount-Valérien, Saint-Germain, the hills of Sartrouville, and Argenteuil, had been murdered and robbed a few days after coming into her share of an unexpected inheritance. This windfall amounted to three thousand francs, a dozen silver spoons and forks, a gold watch and chain, and some linen. Instead of depositing the three thousand francs in Paris, as she was advised by the notary of the wine-merchant who had left it her, the old woman insisted on keeping it by her. In the first place, she had never seen so much money of her own, and then she distrusted everybody in every kind of affairs, as most common and country folk do. After long discussion with a wine-merchant of Nanterre, a relation of her own and of the wine-merchant who had left her the money, the widow decided on buying an annuity, on selling her house at Nanterre, and living in the town of Saint-Germain.

The house she was living in, with a good-sized garden en-

closed by a slight wooden fence, was the poor sort of dwelling usually built by small landowners in the neighborhood of Paris. It had been hastily constructed, with no architectural design, of cement and rubble, the materials commonly used near Paris, where, as at Nanterre, they are extremely abundant, the ground being everywhere broken by quarries open to the sky. This is the ordinary hut of the civilized savage. The house consisted of a ground floor and one floor above, with garrets in the roof.

The quarryman, her deceased husband, and the builder of this dwelling, had put strong iron bars to all the windows; the front door was remarkably thick. The man knew that he was alone there in the open country—and what a country! His customers were the principal master-masons in Paris, so the more important materials for his house, which stood within five hundred yards of his quarry, had been brought out in his own carts returning empty. He could choose such as suited him where houses were pulled down, and got them very cheap. Thus the window-frames, the iron-work, the doors, shutters, and wooden fittings were all derived from sanctioned pilfering, presents from his customers, and good ones, carefully chosen. Of two window-frames, he could take the better.

The house, entered from a large stable-yard, was screened from the road by a wall; the gate was of strong iron-railing. Watch-dogs were kept in the stables, and a little dog indoors at night. There was a garden of more than two acres behind.

His widow, without children, lived here with only a woman servant. The sale of the quarry had paid off the owner's debts; he had been dead about two years. This isolated house was the widow's sole possession, and she kept fowls and cows, selling the eggs and milk at Nanterre. Having no stable-boy or carter or quarryman—her husband had made them do every kind of work—she no longer kept up the garden; she only gathered the few greens and roots that the stony ground allowed to grow self-sown.

The price of the house, with the money she had inherited, would amount to seven or eight thousand francs, and she

could fancy herself living very happily at Saint-Germain on seven or eight hundred francs a year, which she thought she could buy with her eight thousand francs. She had had many discussions over this with the notary at Saint-Germain, for she refused to hand her money over for an annuity to the wine-merchant at Nanterre, who was anxious to have it.

Under these circumstances, then, after a certain day the widow Pigeau and her servant were seen no more. The front gate, the house door, the shutters, all were closed. At the end of three days, the police, being informed, made inquisition. Monsieur Popinot, the examining judge, and the public prosecutor arrived from Paris, and this was what they reported:—

Neither the outer gate nor the front door showed any marks of violence. The key was in the lock of the door, inside. Not a single bar had been wrenched; the locks, shutters, and bolts were all untampered with. The walls showed no traces that could betray the passage of the criminals. The chimney-pots, of red clay, afforded no opportunity for ingress or escape, and the roofing was sound and unbroken, showing no damage by violence.

On entering the first-floor rooms, the magistrates, the gendarmes, and Bibi-Lupin found the widow Pigeau strangled in her bed and the woman strangled in hers, each by means of the bandana she wore as a nightcap. The three thousand francs were gone, with the silver-plate and the trinkets. The two bodies were decomposing, as were those of the little dog and of a large yard-dog.

The wooden palings of the garden were examined; none were broken. The garden paths showed no trace of footsteps. The magistrate thought it probable that the robber had walked on the grass to leave no foot-prints if he had come that way; but how could he have got into the house? The back door to the garden had an outer guard of three iron bars, uninjured; and there, too, the key was in the lock inside, as in the front door.

All these impossibilities having been duly noted by Monsieur Popinot, by Bibi-Lupin, who stayed there a day to ex-

amine every detail, by the public prosecutor himself, and by the sergeant of the gendarmerie at Nanterre, this murder became an agitating mystery, in which the Law and the Police were nonplussed.

This drama, published in the *Gazette des Tribunaux,* took place in the winter of 1828-29. God alone knows what excitement this puzzling crime occasioned in Paris! But Paris has a new drama to watch very morning, and forgets everything. The police, on the contrary, forgets nothing.

Three months after this fruitless inquiry, a girl of the town, whose extravagance had invited the attention of Bibi-Lupin's agents, who watched her as being the ally of several thieves, tried to persuade a woman she knew to pledge twelve silver spoons and forks and a gold watch and chain. The friend refused. This came to Bibi-Lupin's ears, and he remembered the plate and the watch and chain stolen at Nanterre. The commissioners of the Mont-de-Piété, and all the receivers of stolen goods, were warned, while Manon la Blonde was subjected to unremitting scrutiny.

It was very soon discovered that Manon la Blonde was madly in love with a young man who was never to be seen, and was supposed to be deaf to all the fair Manon's proofs of devotion. Mystery on mystery. However, this youth, under the diligent attentions of police spies, was soon seen and identified as an escaped convict, the famous hero of the Corsican vendetta, the handsome Théodore Calvi, known as Madeleine.

A man was turned on to entrap Calvi, one of those double-dealing buyers of stolen goods who serve the thieves and the police both at once; he promised to purchase the silver and the watch and chain. At the moment when the dealer of the Cour Saint-Guillaume was counting out the cash to Théodore, dressed as a woman, at half-past six in the evening, the police came in and seized Théodore and the property.

The inquiry was at once begun. On such thin evidence it was impossible to pass a sentence of death. Calvi never swerved, he never contradicted himself. He said that a

country woman had sold him these objects at Argenteuil; that after buying them, the excitement over the murder committed at Nanterre had shown him the danger of keeping this plate and watch and chain in his possession, since, in fact, they were proved by the inventory made after the death of the wine merchant, the widow Pigeau's uncle, to be those that were stolen from her. Compelled at last by poverty to sell them, he said he wished to dispose of them by the intervention of a person to whom no suspicion could attach.

And nothing else could be extracted from the convict, who, by his taciturnity and firmness, contrived to insinuate that the wine-merchant at Nanterre had committed the crime, and that the woman of whom he, Théodore, had bought them was the wine-merchant's wife. The unhappy man and his wife were both taken into custody; but, after a week's imprisonment, it was amply proved that neither the husband nor the wife had been out of their house at the time. Also, Calvi failed to recognize in the wife the woman who, as he declared, had sold him the things.

As it was shown that Calvi's mistress, implicated in the case, had spent about a thousand francs since the date of the crime and the day when Calvi tried to pledge the plate and trinkets, the evidence seemed strong enough to commit Calvi and the girl for trial. This murder being the eighteenth which Théodore had committed, he was condemned to death, for he seemed certainly to be guilty of this skilfully contrived crime. Though he did not recognize the wine-merchant's wife, both she and her husband recognized him. The inquiry had proved, by the evidence of several witnesses, that Théodore had been living at Nanterre for about a month; he had worked at a mason's his face whitened with plaster, and his clothes very shabby. At Nanterre the lad was supposed to be about eighteen years old, and for the whole month he must have been nursing that brat (*nourri ce poupon, i. e.* hatching the crime).

The lawyers thought he must have had accomplices. The chimney-pots were measured and compared with the size of

Manon la Blonde's body to see if she could have got in that way; but a child of six could not have passed up or down those red-clay pipes, which, in modern buildings, take the place of the vast chimneys of old-fashioned houses. But for this singular and annoying difficulty, Théodore would have been executed within a week. The prison chaplain, it has been seen, could make nothing of him.

All this business, and the name of Calvi, must have escaped the notice of Jacques Collin, who, at the time, was absorbed in his single-handed struggle with Contenson, Corentin, and Peyrade. It had indeed been a point with Trompe-la-Mort to forget as far as possible his chums and all that had to do with the law courts; he dreaded a meeting which should bring him face to face with a pal who might demand an account of his boss which Collin could not possibly render.

The governor of the prison went forthwith to the public prosecutor's court, where he found the Attorney-General in conversation with Monsieur de Granville, an order for the execution in his hand. Monsieur de Granville, who had spent the whole night at the Hôtel de Sérizy, was, in consequence of this important case, obliged to give a few hours to his duties, though overwhelmed with fatigue and grief; for the physicians could not yet promise that the Countess would recover her sanity.

After speaking a few words to the governor, Monsieur de Granville took the warrant from the attorney and placed it in Gault's hands.

"Let the matter proceed," said he, "unless some extraordinary circumstances should arise. Of this you must judge. I trust to your judgment. The scaffold need not be erected till half-past ten, so you still have an hour. On such an occasion hours are centuries, and many things may happen in a century. Do not allow him to think he is reprieved; prepare the man for execution if necessary; and if nothing comes of that, give Sanson the warrant at half-past nine. Let him wait!"

As the governor of the prison left the public prosecutor's room, under the archway of the passage into the hall he met Monsieur Camusot, who was going there. He exchanged a few hurried words with the examining judge; and after telling him what had been done at the Conciergerie with regard to Jacques Collin, he went on to witness the meeting of Trompe-la-Mort and Madeleine; and he did not allow the so-called priest to see the condemned criminal till Bibi-Lupin, admirably disguised as a gendarme, had taken the place of the prisoner left in charge of the young Corsican.

No words can describe the amazement of the three convicts when a warder came to fetch Jacques Collin and led him to the condemned cell! With one consent they rushed up to the chair on which Jacques Collin was sitting.

"To-day, isn't it, monsieur?" asked Fil-de-Soie of the warder.

"Yes, Jack Ketch is waiting," said the man with perfect indifference.

Charlot is the name by which the executioner is known to the populace and the prison world in Paris. The nickname dates from the Revolution of 1789.

The words produced a great sensation. The prisoners looked at each other.

"It is all over with him," the warder went on; "the warrant has been delivered to Monsieur Gault, and the sentence has just been read to him."

"And so the fair Madeleine has received the last sacraments?" said la Pouraille, and he swallowed a deep mouthful of air.

"Poor little Théodore!" cried le Biffon; "he is a pretty chap too. What a pity to drop your nut" (*éternuer dans le son*) "so young."

The warder went towards the gate, thinking that Jacques Collin was at his heels. But the Spaniard walked very slowly, and when he was getting near to Julien he tottered and signed to la Pouraille to give him his arm.

"He is a murderer," said Napolitas to the priest, pointing to la Pouraille, and offering his own arm.

"No, to me he is an unhappy wretch!" replied Jacques Collin, with the presence of mind and the unction of the Archbishop of Cambrai. And he drew away from Napolitas, of whom he had been very suspicious from the first. Then he said to his pals in an undertone:

"He is on the bottom step of the Abbaye de Monte-à-Regret, but I am the Prior! I will show you how well I know how to come round the beaks. I mean to snatch this boy's nut from their jaws."

"For the sake of his breeches!" said Fil-de-Soie with a smile.

"I mean to win his soul to heaven!" replied Jacques Collin fervently, seeing some other prisoners about him. And he joined the warder at the gate.

"He got in to save Madeleine," said Fil-de-Soie. "We guessed rightly. What a boss he is!"

"But how can he? Jack Ketch's men are waiting. He will not even see the kid," objected le Biffon.

"The devil is on his side!" cried la Pouraille. "He claim our blunt! Never! He is too fond of his old chums! We are too useful to him! They wanted to make us blow the gaff, but we are not such flats! If he saves his Madeleine, I will tell him all my secrets."

The effect of this speech was to increase the devotion of the three convicts to their boss; for at this moment he was all their hope.

Jacques Collin, in spite of Madeleine's peril, did not forget to play his part. Though he knew the Conciergerie as well as he knew the hulks in the three ports, he blundered so naturally that the warder had to tell him, "This way, that way," till they reached the office. There, at a glance, Jacques Collin recognized a tall, stout man leaning on the stove, with a long, red face not without distinction: it was Sanson.

"Monsieur is the chaplain?" said he, going towards him with simple cordiality.

The mistake was so shocking that it froze the bystanders.

"No, monsieur," said Sanson; "I have other functions."

Sanson, the father of the last executioner of that name—for he has recently been dismissed—was the son of the man who beheaded Louis XVI. After four centuries of hereditary office, this descendant of so many executioners had tried to repudiate the traditional burden. The Sansons were for two hundred years executioners at Rouen before being promoted to the first rank in the kingdom, and had carried out the decrees of justice from father to son since the thirteenth century. Few families can boast of an office or of nobility handed down in a direct line during six centuries.

This young man had been captain in a cavalry regiment, and was looking forward to a brilliant military career, when his father insisted on his help in decapitating the king. Then he made his son his deputy when, in 1793, two guillotines were in constant work—one at the Barrière du Trône, and the other in the Place de Grève. This terrible functionary, now a man of about sixty, was remarkable for his dignified air, his gentle and deliberate manners, and his entire contempt for Bibi-Lupin and his acolytes who fed the machine. The only detail which betrayed the blood of the mediæval executioner was the formidable breadth and thickness of his hands. Well informed too, caring greatly for his position as a citizen and an elector, and an enthusiastic florist, this tall, brawny man with his low voice, his calm reserve, his few words, and a high bald forehead, was like an English nobleman rather than an executioner. And a Spanish priest would certainly have fallen into the mistake which Jacques Collin had intentionally made.

"He is no convict!" said the head warder to the governor.

"I begin to think so too," replied Monsieur Gault, with a nod to that official.

Jacques Collin was led to the cellar-like room where Théodore Calvi, in a straitwaistcoat, was sitting on the edge of the wretched camp bed. Trompe-la-Mort, under a transient gleam of light from the passage, at once recognized Bibi-Lupin in the gendarme who stood leaning on his sword.

"Io sono Gaba-Morto. Parla nostro Italiano," said Jacques Collin very rapidly. "Vengo ti salvar."

"I am Trompe-la-Mort. Talk our Italian. I have come to save you."

All the two chums wanted to say had, of course, to be incomprehensible to the pretended gendarme; and as Bibi-Lupin was left in charge of the prisoner, he could not leave his post. The man's fury was quite indescribable.

Théodore Calvi, a young man with a pale olive complexion, light hair, and hollow, dull, blue eyes, well built, hiding prodigious strength under the lymphatic appearance that is not uncommon in Southerners, would have had a charming face but for the strongly-arched eyebrows and low forehead that gave him a sinister expression, scarlet lips of savage cruelty, and a twitching of the muscles peculiar to Corsicans, denoting that excessive irritability which makes them so prompt to kill in any sudden squabble.

Théodore, startled at the sound of that voice, raised his head, and at first thought himself the victim of a delusion; but as the experience of two months had accustomed him to the darkness of this stone box, he looked at the sham priest, and sighed deeply. He did not recognize Jacques Collin, whose face, scarred by the application of sulphuric acid, was not that of his old boss.

"It is really your Jacques; I am your confessor, and have come to get you off. Do not be such a ninny as to know me; and speak as if you were making a confession." He spoke with the utmost rapidity. "This young fellow is very much depressed; he is afraid to die, he will confess everything," said Jacques Collin, addressing the gendarme.

Bibi-Lupin dared not say a word for fear of being recognized.

"Say something to show me that you are he; you have nothing but his voice," said Théodore.

"You see, poor boy, he assures me that he is innocent," said Jacques Collin to Bibi-Lupin, who dared not speak for fear of being recognized.

"Sempre mi," said Jacques, returning close to Théodore, and speaking the word in his ear.

"*Sempre ti,*" replied Théodore, giving the countersign. "Yes, you are the boss——"

"Did you do the trick?"

"Yes."

"Tell me the whole story, that I may see what can be done to save you; make haste, Jack Ketch is waiting."

The Corsican at once knelt down and pretended to be about to confess.

Bibi-Lupin did not know what to do, for the conversation was so rapid that it hardly took as much time as it does to read it. Théodore hastily told all the details of the crime, of which Jacques Collin knew nothing.

"The jury gave their verdict without proof," he said finally.

"Child! you want to argue when they are waiting to cut off your hair——"

"But I might have been sent to spout the wedge.—And that is the way they judge you!—and in Paris too!"

"But how did you do the job?" asked Trompe-la-Mort.

"Ah! there you are.—Since I saw you I made acquaintance with a girl, a Corsican, I met when I came to Paris."

"Men who are such fools as to love a woman," cried Jacques Collin, "always come to grief that way. They are tigers on the loose, tigers who blab and look at themselves in the glass.—You were a gaby."

"But——"

"Well, what good did she do you—that curse of a moll?"

"That duck of a girl—no taller than a bundle of firewood, as slippery as an eel, and as nimble as a monkey—got in at the top of the oven, and opened the front door. The dogs were well crammed with balls, and as dead as herrings. I settled the two women. Then when I got the swag, Ginetta locked the door and got out again by the oven."

"Such a clever dodge deserves life," said Jacques Collin, admiring the execution of the crime as a sculptor admires the modeling of a figure.

"And I was fool enough to waste all that cleverness for a thousand crowns!"

"No, for a woman," replied Jacques Collin. "I tell you, they deprive us of all our wits," and Jacques Collin eyed Théodore with a flashing glance of contempt.

"But you were not there!" said the Corsican; "I was all alone——"

"And do you love the slut?" asked Jacques Collin, feeling that the reproach was a just one.

"Oh! I want to live, but it is for you now rather than for her."

"Be quite easy, I am not called Trompe-la-Mort for nothing. I undertake the case."

"What! life?" cried the lad, lifting his swaddled hands towards the damp vault of the cell.

"My little Madeleine, prepare to be lagged for life (penal servitude)," replied Jacques Collin. "You can expect no less; they won't crown you with roses like a fatted ox. When they first set us down for Rochefort, it was because they wanted to be rid of us! But if I can get you ticketed for Toulon, you can get out and come back to Pantin (Paris), where I will find you a tidy way of living."

A sigh such as had rarely been heard under that inexorable roof struck the stones, which sent back the sound that has no fellow in music, to the ear of the astounded Bibi-Lupin.

"It is the effect of the absolution I promised him in return for his revelations," said Jacques Collin to the gendarme. "These Corsicans, monsieur, are full of faith! But he is as innocent as the Immaculate Babe, and I mean to try to save him."

"God bless you, Monsieur l'Abbé!" said Théodore in French.

Trompe-la-Mort, more Carlos Herrera, more the canon than ever, left the condemned cell, rushed back to the hall, and appeared before Monsieur Gault in affected horror.

"Indeed, sir, the young man is innocent; he has told me who the guilty person is! He was ready to die for a false point of honor—he is a Corsican! Go and beg the public

prosecutor to grant me five minutes' interview. Monsieur de Granville cannot refuse to listen at once to a Spanish priest who is suffering so cruelly from the blunders of the French police."

"I will go," said Monsieur Gault, to the extreme astonishment of all the witnesses of this extraordinary scene.

"And meanwhile," said Jacques, "send me back to the prison-yard where I may finish the conversion of a criminal whose heart I have touched already—they have hearts, these people!"

This speech produced a sensation in all who heard it. The gendarmes, the registry clerk, Sanson, the warders, the executioner's assistant—all awaiting orders to go and get the scaffold ready—to rig up the machine, in prison slang—all these people, usually so indifferent, were agitated by very natural curiosity.

Just then the rattle of a carriage with high-stepping horses was heard; it stopped very suggestively at the gate of the Conciergerie on the quay. The door was opened, and the step let down in such haste, that every one supposed that some great personage had arrived. Presently a lady waving a sheet of blue paper came forward to the outer gate of the prison, followed by a footman and a *chasseur*. Dressed very handsomely, and all in black, with a veil over her bonnet, she was wiping her eyes with a floridly embroidered handkerchief.

Jacques Collin at once recognized Asie, or, to give the woman her true name, Jacqueline Collin, his aunt. This horrible old woman—worthy of her nephew—whose thoughts were all centered in the prisoner, and who was defending him with intelligence and mother-wit that were a match for the powers of the law, had a permit made out the evening before in the name of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse's waiting-maid by the request of Monsieur de Sérizy, allowing her to see Lucien de Rubempré, and the Abbé Carlos Herrera so soon as he should be brought out of the secret cells. On this the Colonel, who was the Governor-in-Chief of all the prisons, had written a few words, and the mere color of the paper re-

vealed powerful influences; for these permits, like theatre-tickets, differ in shape and appearance.

So the turnkey hastened to open the gate, especially when he saw the *chasseur* with his plumes and an uniform of green and gold as dazzling as a Russian General's, proclaiming a lady of aristocratic rank and almost royal birth.

"Oh, my dear Abbé!" exclaimed this fine lady, shedding a torrent of tears at the sight of the priest, "how could any one ever think of putting such a saintly man in here, even by mistake?"

The Governor took the permit and read, "Introduced by His Excellency the Comte de Sérizy."

"Ah! Madame de San-Esteban, Madame la Marquise," cried Carlos Herrera, "what admirable devotion!"

"But, madame, such interviews are against the rules," said the good old Governor. And he intercepted the advance of this bale of black watered-silk and lace.

"But at such a distance!" said Jacques Collin, "and in your presence——" and he looked round at the group.

His aunt, whose dress might well dazzle the clerk, the Governor, the warders, and the gendarmes, stank of musk. She had on, besides a thousand crowns worth of lace, a black India cashmere shawl, worth six thousand francs. And her *chasseur* was marching up and down outside with the insolence of a lackey who knows that he is essential to an exacting princess. He spoke never a word to the footman, who stood by the gate on the quay, which is always open by day.

"What do you wish? What can I do?" said Madame de San-Esteban in the lingo agreed upon by this aunt and nephew.

This dialect consisted in adding terminations in *ar* or in *or*, or in *al* or in *i* to every word, whether French or slang, so as to disguise it by lengthening it. It was a diplomatic cipher adapted to speech.

"Put all the letters in some safe place; take out those that are most likely to compromise the ladies; come back, dressed very poorly, to the Salle des Pas-Perdus, and wait for my orders."

Asie, otherwise Jacqueline, knelt as if to receive his blessing, and the sham priest blessed his aunt with evangelical unction.

"Addio, Marchesa," said he aloud. "And," he added in their private language, "find Europe and Paccard with the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs they bagged. We must have them."

"Paccard is out there," said the pious Marquise, pointing to the *chasseur,* her eyes full of tears.

This intuitive comprehension brought not merely a smile to the man's lips, but a gesture of surprise; no one could astonish him but his aunt. The sham Marquise turned to the bystanders with the air of a woman accustomed to give herself airs.

"He is in despair at being unable to attend his son's funeral," said she in broken French, "for this monstrous miscarriage of justice has betrayed the saintly man's secret.—I am going to the funeral mass.—Here, monsieur," she added to the Governor, handing him a purse of gold, "this is to give your poor prisoners some comforts."

"What slap-up style!" her nephew whispered in approval.

Jacques Collin then followed the warder, who led him back to the yard.

Bibi-Lupin, quite desperate, had at last caught the eye of a real gendarme, to whom, since Jacques Collin had gone, he had been addressing significant *"Ahems,"* and who took his place on guard in the condemned cell. But Trompe-la-Mort's sworn foe was released too late to see the great lady, who drove off in her dashing turn-out, and whose voice, though disguised, fell on his ear with a vicious twang.

"Three hundred shiners for the boarders," said the head warder, showing Bibi-Lupin the purse, which Monsieur Gault had handed over to his clerk.

"Let's see, Monsieur Jacomety," said Bibi-Lupin.

The police agent took the purse, poured out the money into his hand, and examined it curiously.

"Yes, it is gold, sure enough!" said he, "and a coat-of-

arms on the purse! The scoundrel! How clever he is! What an all-round villain! He does us all brown——and all the time! He ought to be shot down like a dog!"

"Why, what's the matter?" asked the clerk, taking back the money.

"The matter! Why, the hussy stole it!" cried Bibi-Lupin, stamping with rage on the flags of the gateway.

The words produced a great sensation among the spectators, who were standing at a little distance from Monsieur Sanson. He, too, was still standing, his back against the large stove in the middle of the vaulted hall, awaiting the order to crop the felon's hair and erect the scaffold on the Place de Grève.

On re-entering the yard, Jacques Collin went towards his chums at a pace suited to a frequenter of the galleys.

"What have you on your mind?" said he to la Pouraille.

"My game is up," said the man, whom Jacques Collin led into a corner. "What I want now is a pal I can trust."

"What for?"

La Pouraille, after telling the tale of all his crimes, but in thieves' slang, gave an account of the murder and robbery of the two Crottats.

"You have my respect," said Jacques Collin. "The job was well done; but you seem to me to have blundered afterwards."

"In what way?"

"Well, having done the trick, you ought to have had a Russian passport, have made up as a Russian prince, bought a fine coach with a coat-of-arms on it, have boldly deposited your money in a bank, have got a letter of credit on Hamburg, and then have set out posting to Hamburg with a valet, a ladies' maid, and your mistress disguised as a Russian princess. At Hamburg you should have sailed for Mexico. A chap of spirit, with two hundred and eighty thousand francs in gold, ought to be able to do what he pleases and go where he pleases, flathead!"

"Oh yes, you have such notions because you are the boss Your nut is always square on your shoulders—but I——"

"In short, a word of good advice in your position is like broth to a dead man," said Jacques Collin, with a serpent-like gaze at his old pal.

"True enough!" said la Pouraille, looking dubious. "But give me the broth, all the same. If it does not suit my stomach, I can warm my feet in it——"

"Here you are nabbed by the Justice, with five robberies and three murders, the latest of them those of two rich and respectable folks. . . . Now, juries do not like to see respectable folks killed. You will be put through the machine, and there is not a chance for you."

"I have heard all that," said la Pouraille lamentably.

"My aunt Jacqueline, with whom I have just exchanged a few words in the office, and who is, as you know, a mother to the pals, told me that the authorities mean to be quit of you; they are so much afraid of you."

"But I am rich now," said la Pouraille, with a simplicity which showed how convinced a thief is of his natural right to steal. "What are they afraid of?"

"We have no time for philosophizing," said Jacques Collin. "To come back to you——"

"What do you want with me?" said la Pouraille, interrupting his boss.

"You shall see. A dead dog is still worth something."

"To other people," said la Pouraille.

"I take you into my game!" said Jacques Collin.

"Well, that is something," said the murderer. "What next?"

"I do not ask you where your money is, but what you mean to do with it?"

La Pouraille looked into the convict's impenetrable eye, and Jacques coldly went on: "Have you a trip you are sweet upon, or a child, or a pal to be helped? I shall be outside within an hour, and I can do much for any one you want to be good-natured to."

La Pouraille still hesitated; he was delaying with indecision. Jacques Collin produced a clinching argument.

"Your whack of our money would be thirty thousand francs. Do you leave it to the pals? Do you bequeath it to anybody? Your share is safe; I can give it this evening to any one you leave it to."

The murderer gave a little start of satisfaction.

"I have him!" said Jacques Collin to himself. "But we have no time to play. Consider," he went on in la Pouraille's ear, "we have not ten minutes to spare, old chap; the public prosecutor is to send for me, and I am to have a talk with him. I have him safe, and can ring the old boss' neck. I am certain I shall save Madeleine."

"If you save Madeleine, my good boss, you can just as easily——"

"Don't waste your spittle," said Jacques Collin shortly. "Make your will."

"Well, then—I want to leave the money to la Gonore," replied la Pouraille piteously.

"What! Are you living with Moses' widow—the Jew who led the swindling gang in the South?" asked Jacques Collin.

For Trompe-la-Mort, like a great general, knew the person of every one in his army.

"That's the woman," said la Pouraille, much flattered.

"A pretty woman," said Jacques Collin, who knew exactly how to manage his dreadful tools. "The moll is a beauty; she is well informed, and stands by her mates, and a first-rate hand. Yes, la Gonore has made a new man of you! What a flat you must be to risk your nut when you have a trip like her at home! You noodle; you should have set up some respectable little shop and lived quietly.—And what does she do?"

"She is settled in the Rue Sainte-Barbe, managing a house——"

"And she is to be your legatee? Ah, my dear boy, this is what such sluts bring us to when we are such fools as to love them."

"Yes, but don't you give her anything till I am done for."

"It is a sacred trust," said Jacques Collin very seriously.

"And nothing to the pals?"

"Nothing! They blowed the gaff for me," answered la Pouraille vindictively.

"Who did? Shall I serve 'em out?" asked Jacques Collin eagerly, trying to rouse the last sentiment that survives in these souls till the last hour. "Who knows, old pal, but I might at the same time do them a bad turn and serve you with the public prosecutor?"

The murderer looked at his boss with amazed satisfaction.

"At this moment," the boss replied to this expressive look, "I am playing the game only for Théodore. When this farce is played out, old boy, I might do wonders for a chum—for you are a chum of mine."

"If I see that you really can put off the engagement for that poor little Théodore, I will do anything you choose—there!"

"But the trick is done. I am sure to save his head. If you want to get out of the scrape, you see, la Pouraille, you must be ready to do a good turn—we can do nothing single-handed——"

"That's true," said the felon.

His confidence was so strong, and his faith in the boss so fanatical, that he no longer hesitated. La Pouraille revealed the names of his accomplices, a secret hitherto well kept. This was all Jacques needed to know.

"That is the whole story. Ruffard was the third in the job with me and Godet——"

"Arrache-Laine?" cried Jacques Collin, giving Ruffard his nickname among the gang.

"That's the man.—And the blackguards peached because I knew where they had hidden their whack, and they did not know where mine was."

"You are making it all easy, my cherub!" said Jacques Collin.

"What?"

"Well," replied the master, "you see how wise it is to trust me entirely. Your revenge is now part of the hand I am

playing.—I do not ask you to tell me where the dibs are, you can tell me at the last moment; but tell me all about Ruffard and Godet."

"You are, and you always will be, our boss; I have no secrets from you," replied la Pouraille. "My money is in the cellar at la Gonore's."

"And you are not afraid of her telling?"

"Why, get along! She knows nothing about my little game!" replied la Pouraille. "I make her drunk, though she is of the sort that would never blab even with her head under the knife.—But such a lot of gold——!"

"Yes, that turns the milk of the purest conscience," replied Jacques Collin.

"So I could do the job with no peepers to spy me. All the chickens were gone to roost. The shiners are three feet underground behind some wine-bottles. And I spread some stones and mortar over them."

"Good," said Jacques Collin. "And the others?"

"Ruffard's pieces are with la Gonore in the poor woman's bedroom, and he has her tight by that, for she might be nabbed as accessory after the fact, and end her days in Saint-Lazare."

"The villain! The reelers teach a thief what's what," said Jacques.

"Godet left his pieces at his sister's, a washerwoman; honest girl, she may be caught for five years in La Force without dreaming of it. The pal raised the tiles of the floor, put them back again, and guyed."

"Now do you know what I want you to do?" said Jacques Collin, with a magnetizing gaze at la Pouraille.

"What?"

"I want you to take Madeleine's job on your shoulders."

La Pouraille started queerly; but he at once recovered himself and stood at attention under the boss' eye.

"So you shy at that? You dare to spoil my game? Come, now! Four murders or three. Does it not come to the same thing?"

"Perhaps."

"By the God of good-fellowship, there is no blood in your veins! And I was thinking of saving you!"

"How?"

"Idiot, if we promise to give the money back to the family, you will only be lagged for life. I would not give a piece for your nut if we keep the blunt, but at this moment you are worth seven hundred thousand francs, you flat."

"Good for you, boss!" cried la Pouraille in great glee.

"And then," said Jacques Collin, "besides casting all the murders on Ruffard—Bibi-Lupin will be finely sold. I have him this time."

La Pouraille was speechless at this suggestion; his eyes grew round, and he stood like an image.

He had been three months in custody, and was committed for trial, and his chums at La Force, to whom he had never mentioned his accomplices, had given him such small comfort, that he was entirely hopeless after his examination, and this simple expedient had been quite overlooked by these prison-ridden minds. This semblance of a hope almost stupefied his brain.

"Have Ruffard and Godet had their spree yet? Have they forked out any of the yellow boys?" asked Jacques Collin.

"They dare not," replied la Pouraille. "The wretches are waiting till I am turned off. That is what my moll sent me word by la Biffe when she came to see le Biffon."

"Very well; we will have their whack of money in twenty-four hours," said Jacques Collin. "Then the blackguards cannot pay up, as you will; you will come out as white as snow, and they will be red with all that blood! By my kind offices you will seem a good sort of fellow led away by them. I shall have money enough of yours to prove *alibis* on the other counts, and when you are back on the hulks—for you are bound to go there—you must see about escaping. It is a dog's life, still it is life!"

La Pouraille's eyes glittered with suppressed delirium.

"With seven hundred thousand francs you can get a good

many drinks," said Jacques Collin, making his pal quite drunk with hope.

"Ay, ay, boss!"

"I can bamboozle the Minister of Justice.—Ah, ha! Ruffard will shell out to do for a reeler. Bibi-Lupin is fairly gulled!"

"Very good, it is a bargain," said la Pouraille with savage glee. "You order, and I obey."

And he hugged Jacques Collin in his arms, while tears of joy stood in his eyes, so hopeful did he feel of saving his head.

"That is not all," said Jacques Collin; "the public prosecutor does not swallow everything, you know, especially when a new count is entered against you. The next thing is to bring a moll into the case by blowing the gaff."

"But how, and what for?"

"Do as I bid you; you will see." And Trompe-la-Mort briefly told the secret of the Nanterre murders, showing him how necessary it was to find a woman who would pretend to be Ginetta. Then he and la Pouraille, now in good spirits, went across to le Biffon.

"I know how sweet you are on la Biffe," said Jacques Collin to this man.

The expression in le Biffon's eyes was a horrible poem.

"What will she do while you are on the hulks?"

A tear sparkled in le Biffon's fierce eyes.

"Well, suppose I were to get her lodgings in the *Lorcefé des Largues*" (the women's La Force, *i. e.* les Madelonnettes or Saint-Lazare) "for a stretch, allowing that time for you to be sentenced and sent there, to arrive and to escape?"

"Even you cannot work such a miracle. She took no part in the job," replied la Biffe's partner.

"Oh, my good Biffon," said la Pouraille, "our boss is more powerful than God Almighty."

"What is your password for her?" asked Jacques Collin, with the assurance of a master to whom nothing can be refused.

"*Sorgue à Pantin*" (night in Paris). "If you say that she

knows you have come from me, and if you want her to do as you bid her, show her a five-franc piece and say *Tondif.*"

"She will be involved in the sentence on la Pouraille, and let off with a year in quod for snitching," said Jacques Collin, looking at la Pouraille.

La Pouraille understood his boss' scheme, and by a single look promised to persuade le Biffon to promote it by inducing la Biffe to take upon herself this complicity in the crime la Pouraille was prepared to confess.

"Farewell, my children. You will presently hear that I have saved my boy from Jack Ketch," said Trompe-la-Mort. "Yes, Jack Ketch and his hairdresser were waiting in the office to get Madeleine ready.—There," he added, "they have come to fetch me to go to the public prosecutor."

And, in fact, a warder came out of the gate and beckoned to this extraordinary man, who, in face of the young Corsican's danger, had recovered the savage power which enabled him to hold his own against his own society.

It is worthy of note that at the moment when Lucien's body was taken away from him, Jacques Collin had, with a crowning effort, made up his mind to attempt a last incarnation, not as a human being, but as a *thing*. He had at last taken the fateful step that Napoleon took on board the boat which conveyed him to the *Bellerophon*. And a strange concurrence of events aided this genius of evil and corruption in his undertaking.

But though the unlooked-for conclusion of this life of crime may perhaps be deprived of some of the marvelous effect which, in our day, can be given to a narrative only by incredible improbabilities, it is necessary, before we accompany Jacques Collin to the public prosecutor's room, that we should follow Madame Camusot in her visits during the time we have spent in the Conciergerie.

One of the obligations which the historian of manners must unfailingly observe is that of never marring the truth for the sake of dramatic arrangement, especially when the

truth is so kind as to be in itself romantic. Social nature, particularly in Paris, allows of such freaks of chance, such complications of whimsical entanglements, that it constantly outdoes the most inventive imagination. The audacity of facts, by sheer improbability or indecorum, rises to heights of "situation" forbidden to art, unless they are softened, cleansed, and purified by the writer.

Madame Camusot did her utmost to dress herself for the morning almost in good taste—a difficult task for the wife of a judge who for six years has lived in a provincial town. Her object was to give no hold for criticism to the Marquise d'Espard or the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, in a call so early as between eight and nine in the morning. Amélie Cécile Camusot, *née* Thirion, it must be said, only half succeeded; and in a matter of dress is this not a twofold blunder?

Few people can imagine how useful the women of Paris are to ambitious men of every class; they are equally necessary in the world of fashion and the world of thieves, where, as we have seen, they fill a most important part. For instance, suppose that a man, not to find himself left in the lurch, must absolutely get speech within a given time with the high functionary who was of such immense importance under the Restoration, and who is to this day called the Keeper of the Seals—a man, let us say, in the most favorable position, a judge, that is to say, a man familiar with the way of things. He is compelled to seek out the presiding judge of a circuit, or some private or official secretary, and prove to him his need of an immediate interview. But is a Keeper of the Seals ever visible "that very minute"? In the middle of the day, if he is not at the Chamber, he is at the Privy Council, or signing papers, or hearing a case. In the early morning he is out, no one knows where. In the evening he has public and private engagements. If every magistrate could claim a moment's interview under any pretext that might occur to him, the Supreme Judge would be besieged.

The purpose of a private and immediate interview is therefore submitted to the judgment of one of those mediatory

potentates who are but an obstacle to be removed, a door that can be unlocked, so long as it is not held by a rival. A woman at once goes to another woman; she can get straight into her bedroom if she can arouse the curiosity of mistress or maid, especially if the mistress is under the stress of a strong interest or pressing necessity.

Call this female potentate Madame la Marquise d'Espard, with whom a Minister has to come to terms; this woman writes a little scented note, which her man-servant carries to the Minister's man-servant. The note greets the Minister on his waking, and he reads it at once. Though the Minister has business to attend to, the man is enchanted to have a reason for calling on one of the Queens of Paris, one of the Powers of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, one of the favorites of the Dauphiness, of MADAME, or of the King. Casimir Périer, the only real statesman of the Revolution of July, would leave anything to call on a retired Gentleman of the Bed-chamber to King Charles X.

This theory accounts for the magical effect of the words:

"Madame,—Madame Camusot, on very important business, which she says you know of," spoken in Madame d'Espard's ear by her maid, who thought she was awake.

And the Marquise desired that Amélie should be shown in at once.

The magistrate's wife was attentively heard when she began with these words:

"Madame la Marquise, we have ruined ourselves by trying to avenge you——"

"How is that, my dear?" replied the Marquise, looking at Madame Camusot in the dim light that fell through the half-open door. "You are vastly sweet this morning in that little bonnet. Where do you get that shape?"

"You are very kind, madame.—Well, you know that Camusot's way of examining Lucien de Rubempré drove the young man to despair, and he hanged himself in prison."

"Oh, what will become of Madame de Sérizy?" cried the Marquise, affecting ignorance, that she might hear the whole story once more.

"Alas! they say she is quite mad," said Amélie. "If you could persuade the Lord Keeper to send for my husband this minute, by special messenger, to meet him at the Palais, the Minister would hear some strange mysteries, and report them, no doubt, to the King. . . . Then Camusot's enemies would be reduced to silence."

"But who are Camusot's enemies?" asked Madame d'Espard.

"The public prosecutor, and now Monsieur de Sérizy."

"Very good, my dear," replied Madame d'Espard, who owed to Monsieur de Granville and the Comte de Sérizy her defeat in the disgraceful proceedings by which she had tried to have her husband treated as a lunatic, "I will protect you; I never forget either my foes or my friends."

She rang; the maid drew open the curtains, and daylight flooded the room; she asked for her desk, and the maid brought it in. The Marquise hastily scrawled a few lines.

"Tell Godard to go on horseback, and carry this note to the Chancellor's office.—There is no reply," said she to the maid.

The woman went out of the room quickly, but, in spite of the order, remained at the door for some minutes.

"There are great mysteries going forward then?" asked Madame d'Espard. "Tell me all about it, dear child. Has Clotilde de Grandlieu put a finger in the pie?"

"You will know everything from the Lord Keeper, for my husband has told me nothing. He only told me he was in danger. It would be better for us that Madame de Sérizy should die than that she should remain mad."

"Poor woman!" said the Marquise. "But was she not mad already?"

Women of the world, by a hundred ways of pronouncing the same phrase, illustrate to attentive hearers the infinite variety of musical modes. The soul goes out into the voice as it does into the eyes; it vibrates in light and in air—the elements acted on by the eyes and voice. By the tone she gave to the two words, "Poor woman!" the Marquise betrayed the

joy of satisfied hatred, the pleasure of triumph. Oh! what woes did she not wish to befall Lucien's protectress. Revenge, which nothing can assuage, which can survive the person hated, fills us with dark terrors. And Madame Camusot, though harsh herself, vindictive, and quarrelsome, was overwhelmed. She could find nothing to say, and was silent.

"Diane told me that Léontine went to the prison," Madame d'Espard went on. "The dear Duchess is in despair at such a scandal, for she is so foolish as to be very fond of Madame de Sérizy; however, it is comprehensible: they both adored that little fool Lucien at about the same time, and nothing so effectually binds or severs two women as worshiping at the same altar. And our dear friend spent two hours yesterday in Léontine's room. The poor Countess, it seems, says dreadful things! I heard that it was disgusting! A woman of rank ought not to give way to such attacks.—Bah! A purely physical passion.—The Duchess came to see me as pale as death; she really was very brave. There are monstrous things connected with this business."

"My husband will tell the Keeper of the Seals all he knows for his own justification, for they wanted to save Lucien, and he, Madame la Marquise, did his duty. An examining judge always has to question people in private at the time fixed by law! He had to ask the poor little wretch something, if only for form's sake, and the young fellow did not understand, and confessed things——"

"He was an impertinent fool!" said Madame d'Espard in a hard tone.

The judge's wife kept silence on hearing this sentence.

"Though we failed in the matter of the Commission in Lunacy, it was not Camusot's fault, I shall never forget that," said the Marquise after a pause. "It was Lucien, Monsieur de Sérizy, Monsieur de Bauvan, and Monsieur de Granville who overthrew us. With time God will be on my side; all those people will come to grief.—Be quite easy, I will send the Chevalier d'Espard to the Keeper of the Seals that he may desire your husband's presence immediately, if that is of any use."

"Oh! madame——"

"Listen," said the Marquise. "I promise you the ribbon of the Legion of Honor at once—to-morrow. It will be a conspicuous testimonial of satisfaction with your conduct in this affair. Yes, it implies further blame on Lucien; it will prove him guilty. Men do not commonly hang themselves for the pleasure of it.—Now, good-bye, my pretty dear——"

Ten minutes later Madame Camusot was in the bedroom of the beautiful Diane de Maufrigneuse, who had not gone to bed till one, an at nine o'clock had not yet slept.

However insensible duchesses may be, even these women, whose hearts are of stone, cannot see a friend a victim to madness without being painfully impressed by it.

And besides, the connection between Diane and Lucien, though at an end now eighteen months since, had left such memories with the Duchess that the poor boy's disastrous end had been to her also a fearful blow. All night Diane had seen visions of the beautiful youth, so charming, so poetical, who had been so delightful a lover—painted as Léontine depicted him, with the vividness of wild delirium. She had letters from Lucien that she had kept, intoxicating letters worthy to compare with Mirabeau's to Sophie, but more literary, more elaborate, for Lucien's letters had been dictated by the most powerful of passions—Vanity. Having the most bewitching of duchesses for his mistress, and seeing her commit any folly for him—secret follies, of course—had turned Lucien's head with happiness. The lover's pride had inspired the poet. And the Duchess had treasured these touching letters, as some old men keep indecent prints, for the sake of their extravagant praise of all that was least duchess-like in her nature.

"And he died in a squalid prison!" cried she to herself, putting the letters away in a panic when she heard her maid knocking gently at her door.

"Madame Camusot," said the woman, "on business of the greatest importance to you, Madame la Duchesse."

Diane sprang to her feet in terror.

"Oh!" cried she, looking at Amélie, who had assumed a duly condoling air, "I guess it all—my letters! It is about my letters. Oh! my letters, my letters!"

She sank on to a couch. She remembered now how, in the extravagance of her passion, she had answered Lucien in the same vein, had lauded the man's poetry as he had sung the charms of the woman, and in what a strain!

"Alas, yes, madame, I have come to save what is dearer to you than life—your honor. Compose yourself and get dressed, we must go to the Duchesse de Grandlieu; happily for you, you are not the only person compromised."

"But at the Palais, yesterday, Léontine burned, I am told, all the letters found at poor Lucien's."

"But, madame, behind Lucien there was Jacques Collin!" cried the magistrate's wife. "You always forget that horrible companionship which beyond question led to that charming and lamented young man's end. That Machiavelli of the galleys never loses his head! Monsieur Camusot is convinced that the wretch has in some safe hiding-place all the most compromising letters written by you ladies to his——"

"His friend," the Duchess hastily put in. "You are right, my child. We must hold council at the Grandlieus'. We are all concerned in this matter, and Sérizy happily will lend us his aid."

Extreme peril—as we have observed in the scenes in the Conciergerie—has a hold over the soul not less terrible than that of powerful reagents over the body. It is a mental Voltaic battery. The day, perhaps, is not far off when the process shall be discovered by which feeling is chemically converted into a fluid not unlike the electric fluid.

The phenomena were the same in the convict and the Duchess. This crushed, half-dying woman, who had not slept, who was so particular over her dressing, had recovered the strength of a lioness at bay, and the presence of mind of a general under fire. Diane chose her gown and got through her dressing with the alacrity of a grisette who is her own wait-

ing-woman. It was so astounding, that the lady's-maid stood for a moment stock-still, so greatly was she surprised to see her mistress in her shift, not ill pleased perhaps to let the judge's wife discern through the thin cloud of lawn a form as white and as perfect as that of Canova's Venus. It was like a gem in a fold of tissue paper. Diane suddenly remembered where a pair of stays had been put that fastened in front, sparing a woman in a hurry the ill-spent time and fatigue of being laced. She had arranged the lace trimming of her shift and the fulness of the bosom by the time the maid had fetched her petticoat, and crowned the work by putting on her gown. While Amélie, at a sign from the maid, hooked the bodice behind, the woman brought out a pair of thread stockings, velvet boots, a shawl, and a bonnet. Amélie and the maid each drew on a stocking.

"You are the loveliest creature I ever saw!" said Amélie, insidiously kissing Diane's elegant and polished knee with an eager impulse.

"Madame has not her match!" cried the maid.

"There, there, Josette, hold your tongue," replied the Duchess.—"Have you a carriage?" she went on, to Madame Camusot. "Then come along, my dear, we can talk on the road."

And the Duchess ran down the great stairs of the Hôtel de Cadignan, putting on her gloves as she went—a thing she had never been known to do.

"To the Hôtel de Grandlieu, and drive fast," said she to one of her men, signing to him to get up behind.

The footman hesitated—it was a hackney coach.

"Ah! Madame la Duchesse, you never told me that the young man had letters of yours. Otherwise Camusot would have proceeded differently . . ."

"Léontine's state so occupied my thoughts that I forgot myself entirely. The poor woman was almost crazy the day before yesterday; imagine the effect on her of this tragical termination. If you could only know, child, what a morning we went through yesterday! It is enough to make one for-

swear love!—Yesterday Léontine and I were dragged across Paris by a horrible old woman, an old-clothes buyer, a domineering creature, to that stinking and blood-stained sty they call the Palace of Justice, and I said to her as I took her there: 'Is not this enough to make us fall on our knees and cry out like Madame de Nucingen, when she went through one of those awful Mediterranean storms on her way to Naples, "Dear God, save me this time, and never again——!"'

"These two days will certainly have shortened my life.—What fools we are ever to write!—But love prompts us; we receive pages that fire the heart through the eyes, and everything is in a blaze! Prudence deserts us—we reply——"

"But why reply when you can act?" said Madame Camusot.

"It is grand to lose oneself utterly!" cried the Duchess with pride. "It is the luxury of the soul."

"Beautiful women are excusable," said Madame Camusot modestly. "They have more opportunities of falling than we have."

The Duchess smiled.

"We are always too generous," said Diane de Maufrigneuse. "I shall do just like that odious Madame d'Espard."

"And what does she do?" asked the judge's wife, very curious.

"She has written a thousand love-notes——"

"So many!" exclaimed Amélie, interrupting the Duchess.

"Well, my dear, and not a word that could compromise her is to be found in any one of them."

"You would be incapable of maintaining such coldness, such caution," said Madame Camusot. "You are a woman; you are one of those angels who cannot stand out against the devil——"

"I have made a vow to write no more letters. I never in my life wrote to anybody but that unhappy Lucien.—I will keep his letters to my dying day! My dear child, they are fire, and sometimes we want——"

"But if they were found!" said Amélie, with a little shocked expression.

"Oh! I should say they were part of a romance I was writing; for I have copied them all, my dear, and burned the originals."

"Oh, madame, as a reward allow me to read them."

"Perhaps, child," said the Duchess. "And then you will see that he did not write such letters as those to Léontine."

This speech was woman all the world over, of every age and every land.

Madame Camusot, like the frog in la Fontaine's fable, was ready to burst her skin with the joy of going to the Grandlieu's in the society of the beautiful Diane de Maufrigneuse. This morning she would forge one of the links that are so needful to ambition. She could already hear herself addressed as Madame la Présidente. She felt the ineffable gladness of triumphing over stupendous obstacles, of which the greatest was her husband's ineptitude, as yet unrevealed, but to her well known. To win success for a second-rate man! This is to a woman—as to a king—the delight which tempts great actors when they act a bad play a hundred times over. It is the very drunkenness of egoism. It is in a way the Saturnalia of power.

Power can prove itself to itself only by the strange misapplication which leads it to crown some absurd person with the laurels of success while insulting genius—the only stronghold which power cannot touch. The knighting of Caligula's horse, an imperial farce, has been, and always will be, a favorite performance.

In a few minutes Diane and Amélie had exchanged the elegant disorder of the fair Diane's bedroom for the severe but dignified and splendid austerity of the Duchesse de Grandlieu's rooms.

She, a Portuguese, and very pious, always rose at eight to attend mass at the little church of Sainte-Valère, a chapelry to Saint-Thomas d'Aquin, standing at that time on the esplanade of the Invalides. This chapel, now destroyed, was

rebuilt in the Rue de Bourgogne, pending the building of a Gothic church to be dedicated to Sainte-Clotilde.

On hearing the first words spoken in her ear by Diane de Maufrigneuse, this saintly lady went to find Monsieur de Grandlieu, and brought him back at once. The Duke threw a flashing look at Madame Camusot, one of those rapid glances with which a man of the world can guess at a whole existence, or often read a soul. Amélie's dress greatly helped the Duke to decipher the story of a middle-class life, from Alençon to Mantes, and from Mantes to Paris.

Oh! if only the lawyer's wife could have understood this gift in dukes, she could never have endured that politely ironical look; she saw the politeness only. Ignorance shares the privileges of fine breeding.

"This is Madame Camusot, a daughter of Thirion's—one of the Cabinet ushers," said the Duchess to her husband.

The Duke bowed with extreme politeness to the wife of a legal official, and his face became a little less grave.

The Duke had rung for his valet, who now came in.

"Go to the Rue Saint-Honoré: take a coach. Ring at a side door, No. 10. Tell the man who opens the door that I beg his master will come here, and if the gentleman is at home, bring him back with you.—Mention my name, that will remove all difficulties.

"And do not be gone more than a quarter of an hour in all."

Another footman, the Duchess' servant, came in as soon as the other was gone.

"Go from me to the Duc de Chaulieu, and send up this card."

The Duke gave him a card folded down in a particular way. When the two friends wanted to meet at once, on any urgent or confidential business which would not allow of note-writing, they used this means of communication.

Thus we see that similar customs prevail in every rank of society, and differ only in manner, civility, and small details. The world of fashion, too, has its *argot,* its slang; but that slang is called style.

"Are you quite sure, madame, of the existence of the letters you say were written by Mademoiselle Clotilde de Grandlieu to this young man?" said the Duc de Grandlieu.

And he cast a look at Madame Camusot as a sailor casts a sounding line.

"I have not seen them, but there is reason to fear it," replied Madame Camusot, quaking.

"My daughter can have written nothing we would not own to!" said the Duchess.

"Poor Duchess!" thought Diane, with a glance at the Duke that terrified him.

"What do you think, my dear little Diane?" said the Duke in a whisper, as he led her away into a recess.

"Clotilde is so crazy about Lucien, my dear friend, that she had made an assignation with him before leaving. If it had not been for little Lenoncourt, she would perhaps have gone off with him into the forest of Fontainebleau. I know that Lucien used to write letters to her which were enough to turn the brain of a saint.—We are three daughters of Eve in the coils of the serpent of letter-writing."

The Duke and Diane came back to the Duchess and Madame Camusot, who were talking in undertones. Amélie, following the advice of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, affected piety to win the proud lady's favor.

"We are at the mercy of a dreadful escaped convict!" said the Duke, with a peculiar shrug. "This is what comes of opening one's house to people one is not absolutely sure of. Before admitting an acquaintance, one ought to know all about his fortune, his relations, all his previous history——"

This speech is the moral of my story—from the aristocratic point of view.

"That is past and over," said the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse. "Now we must think of saving that poor Madame de Sérizy, Clotilde, and me——"

"We can but wait for Henri; I have sent to him. But everything really depends on the man Gentil is gone to fetch. God grant that man may be in Paris!—Madame," he added

to Madame Camusot, "thank you so much for having thought of us——"

This was Madame Camusot's dismissal. The daughter of the Court usher had wit enough to understand the Duke; she rose. But the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, with the enchanting grace which won her so much friendship and discretion, took Amélie by the hand as if to show her, in a way, to the Duke and Duchess.

"On my own account," said she, "to say nothing of her having been up before daybreak to save us all, I may ask for more than a remembrance for my little Madame Camusot. In the first place, she has already done me such service as I cannot forget; and then she is wholly devoted to our side, she and her husband. I have promised that her Camusot shall have advancement, and I beg you above everything to help him on, for my sake."

"You need no such recommendation," said the Duke to Madame Camusot. "The Grandlieus always remember a service done them. The King's adherents will ere long have a chance of distinguishing themselves; they will be called upon to prove their devotion; your husband will be placed in the front——"

Madame Camusot withdrew, proud, happy, puffed up to suffocation. She reached home triumphant; she admired herself, she made light of the public prosecutor's hostility. She said to herself:

"Supposing we were to send Monsieur de Granville flying——"

It was high time for Madame Camusot to vanish. The Duc de Chaulieu, one of the King's prime favorites, met the *bourgeoise* on the outer steps.

"Henri," said the Duc de Grandlieu when he heard his friend announced, "make haste, I beg of you, to get to the Château, try to see the King—the business is this;" and he led the Duke into the window-recess, where he had been talking to the airy and charming Diane.

Now and then the Duc de Chaulieu glanced in the direction

of the flighty Duchess, who, while talking to the pious Duchess and submitting to be lectured, answered the Duc de Chaulieu's expressive looks.

"My dear child," said the Duc de Grandlieu to her at last, the *aside* being ended, "do be good! Come, now," and he took Diane's hands, "observe the proprieties of life, do not compromise yourself any more, write no letters. Letters, my dear, have caused as much private woe as public mischief. What might be excusable in a girl like Clotilde, in love for the first time, had no excuse in——"

"An old soldier who has been under fire," said Diane with a pout.

This grimace and the Duchess' jest brought a smile to the face of the two much-troubled Dukes, and of the pious Duchess herself.

"But for four years I have never written a *billet-doux*.—Are we saved?" asked Diane, who hid her curiosity under this childishness.

"Not yet," said the Duc de Chaulieu. "You have no notion how difficult it is to do an arbitrary thing. In a constitutional king it is what infidelity is in a wife: it is adultery."

"The fascinating sin," said the Duc de Grandlieu.

"Forbidden fruit!" said Diane, smiling. "Oh! how I wish I were the Government, for I have none of that fruit left—I have eaten it all."

"Oh! my dear, my dear!" said the elder Duchess, "you really go too far."

The two Dukes, hearing a coach stop at the door with the clatter of horses checked in full gallop, bowed to the ladies and left them, going into the Duc de Grandlieu's study, whither came the gentleman from the Rue Honoré-Chevalier—no less a man than the chief of the King's private police, the obscure but puissant Corentin.

"Go on," said the Duc de Grandlieu; "go first, Monsieur de Saint-Denis."

Corentin, surprised that the Duke should have remem-

bered him, went forward after bowing low to the two noblemen.

"Always about the same individual, or about his concerns, my dear sir," said the Duc de Grandlieu.

"But he is dead," said Corentin.

"He has left a partner," said the Duc de Chaulieu, "a very tough customer."

"The convict Jacques Collin," replied Corentin.

"Will you speak, Ferdinand?" said the Duc de Chaulieu to his friend.

"That wretch is an object of fear," said the Duc de Grandlieu, "for he has possessed himself, so as to be able to levy blackmail, of the letters written by Madame de Sérizy and Madame de Maufrigneuse to Lucien Chardon, that man's tool. It would seem that it was a matter of system in the young man to extract passionate letters in return for his own, for I am told that Mademoiselle de Grandlieu had written some—at least, so we fear—and we cannot find out from her—she is gone abroad."

"That little young man," replied Corentin, "was incapable of so much foresight. That was a precaution due to the Abbé Carlos Herrera."

Corentin rested his elbow on the arm of the chair on which he was sitting, and his head on his hand, meditating.

"Money!—The man has more than we have," said he. "Esther Gobseck served him as a bait to extract nearly two million francs from that well of gold called Nucingen.—Gentlemen, get me full legal powers, and I will rid you of the fellow."

"And—the letters?" asked the Duc de Grandlieu.

"Listen to me, gentlemen," said Corentin, standing up, his weasel-face betraying his excitement.

He thrust his hands into the pockets of his black doeskin trousers, shaped over the shoes. This great actor in the historical drama of the day had only stopped to put on a waistcoat and frock-coat, and had not changed his morning trousers, so well he knew how grateful great men can be

for immediate action in certain cases. He walked up and down the room quite at his ease, haranguing loudly, as if he had been alone.

"He is a convict. He could be sent off to Bicêtre without trial, and put in solitary confinement, without a soul to speak to, and left there to die.—But he may have given instructions to his adherents, foreseeing this possibility."

"But he was put into the secret cells," said the Duc de Grandlieu, "the moment he was taken into custody at that woman's house."

"Is there such a thing as a secret cell for such a fellow as he is?" said Corentin. "He is a match for—for me!"

"What is to be done?" said the Dukes to each other by a glance.

"We can send the scoundrel back to the hulks at once—to Rochefort; he will be dead in six months! Oh! without committing any crime," he added, in reply to a gesture on the part of the Duc de Grandlieu. "What do you expect? A convict cannot hold out more than six months of a hot summer if he is made to work really hard among the marshes of the Charente. But this is of no use if our man has taken precautions with regard to the letters. If the villain has been suspicious of his foes, and that is probable, we must find out what steps he has taken. Then, if the present holder of the letters is poor, he is open to bribery. So, now, we must make Jacques Collin speak. What a duel! He will beat me. The better plan would be to purchase these letters by exchange for another document—a letter of reprieve—and to place the man in my gang. Jacques Collin is the only man alive who is clever enough to come after me, poor Contenson and dear old Peyrade both being dead! Jacques Collin killed those two unrivaled spies on purpose, as it were, to make a place for himself. So, you see, gentlemen, you must give me a free hand. Jacques Collin is in the Conciergerie. I will go to see Monsieur de Granville in his Court. Send some one you can trust to meet me there, for I must have a letter to show to Monsieur de Granville, who knows nothing of me.

I will hand the letter to the President of the Council, a very impressive sponsor. You have half an hour before you, for I need half an hour to dress, that is to say, to make myself presentable to the eyes of the public prosecutor."

"Monsieur," said the Duc de Chaulieu, "I know your wonderful skill. I only ask you to say Yes or No. Will you be bound to succeed?"

"Yes, if I have full powers, and your word that I shall never be questioned about the matter.—My plan is laid."

This sinister reply made the two fine gentlemen shiver. "Go on, then, monsieur," said the Duc de Chaulieu. "You can set down the charges of the case among those you are in the habit of undertaking."

Corentin bowed and went away.

Henri de Lenoncourt, for whom Ferdinand de Grandlieu had a carriage brought out, went off forthwith to the King, whom he was privileged to see at all times in right of his office.

Thus all the various interests that had got entangled from the highest to the lowest ranks of society were to meet presently in Monsieur de Granville's room at the Palais, all brought together by necessity embodied in three men—Justice in Monsieur de Granville, and the family in Corentin, face to face with Jacques Collin, the terrible foe who represented social crime in its fiercest energy.

What a duel is that between justice and arbitrary wills on one side and the hulks and cunning on the other! The hulks—symbolical of that daring which throws off calculation and reflection, which avails itself of any means, which has none of the hyprocrisy of high-handed justice, but is the hideous outcome of the starving stomach—the swift and bloodthirsty pretext of hunger. Is it not attack as against self-protection, theft as against property? The terrible quarrel between the social state and the natural man, fought out on the narrowest possible ground! In short, it is a terrible and vivid image of those compromises, hostile to social interests, which the representatives of authority, when they lack power, submit to with the fiercest rebels.

When Monsieur Camusot was announced, the public prosecutor signed that he should be admitted. Monsieur de Granville had foreseen this visit, and wished to come to an understanding with the examining judge as to how to wind up this business of Lucien's death. The end could no longer be that on which he had decided the day before in agreement with Camusot, before the suicide of the hapless poet.

"Sit down, Monsieur Camusot," said Monsieur de Granville, dropping into his armchair. The public prosecutor, alone with the inferior judge, made no secret of his depressed state. Camusot looked at Monsieur de Granville and observed his almost livid pallor, and such utter fatigue, such complete prostration, as betrayed greater suffering perhaps than that of the condemned man to whom the clerk had announced the rejection of his appeal. And yet that announcement, in the forms of justice, is as much as to say, "Prepare to die; your last hour has come."

"I will return later, Monsieur le Comte," said Camusot. "Though the business is pressing——"

"No, stay," replied the public prosecutor with dignity. "A magistrate, monsieur, must accept his anxieties and know how to hide them. I was in fault if you saw any traces of agitation in me——"

Camusot bowed apologetically.

"God grant you may never know these crucial perplexities of our life. A man might sink under less! I have just spent the night with one of my most intimate friends.—I have but two friends, the Comte Octave de Bauvan and the Comte de Sérizy.—We sat together, Monsieur de Sérizy, the Count, and I, from six in the evening till six this morning, taking it in turns to go from the drawing-room to Madame de Sérizy's bedside, fearing each time that we might find her dead or irremediably insane. Desplein, Bianchon, and Sinard never left the room, and she has two nurses. The Count worships his wife. Imagine the night I have spent, between a woman crazy with love and a man crazy with despair. And a statesman's despair is not like that of an

idiot. Sérizy, as calm as if he were sitting in his place in council, clutched his chair to force himself to show us an unmoved countenance, while sweat stood over the brows bent by so much hard thought.—Worn out by want of sleep, I dozed from five till half-past seven, and I had to be here by half-past eight to warrant an execution. Take my word for it, Monsieur Camusot, when a judge has been toiling all night in such gulfs of sorrow, feeling the heavy hand of God on all human concerns, and heaviest on noble souls, it is hard to sit down here, in front of a desk, and say in cold blood, 'Cut off a head at four o'clock! Destroy one of God's creatures full of life, health, and strength!'—And yet this is my duty! Sunk in grief myself, I must order the scaffold——

"The condemned wretch cannot know that his judge suffers anguish equal to his own. At this moment he and I, linked by a sheet of paper—I, society avenging itself; he, the crime to be avenged—embody the same duty seen from two sides; we are two lives joined for the moment by the sword of the law.

"Who pities the judge's deep sorrow? Who can soothe it? Our glory is to bury it in the depth of our heart. The priest with his life given to God, the soldier with a thousand deaths for his country's sake, seem to me far happier than the magistrate with his doubts and fears and appalling responsibility.

"You know who the condemned man is?" Monsieur de Granville went on. "A young man of seven-and-twenty—as handsome as he who killed himself yesterday, and as fair; condemned against all our anticipations, for the only proof against him was his concealment of the stolen goods. Though sentenced, the lad will confess nothing! For seventy days he has held out against every test, constantly declaring that he is innocent. For two months I have felt two heads on my shoulders! I would give a year of my life if he would confess, for juries need encouragement; and imagine what a blow it would be to justice if some day it should be discovered that the crime for which he is punished was committed by another.

"In Paris everything is so terribly important; the most trivial incidents in the law courts have political consequences.

"The jury, an institution regarded by the legislators of the Revolution as a source of strength, is, in fact, an instrument of social ruin, for it fails in action; it does not sufficiently protect society. The jury trifles with its functions. The class of jurymen is divided into two parties, one averse to capital punishment; the result is a total upheaval of true epuality in administration of the law. Parricide, a most horrible crime, is in some departments treated with leniency, while in others a common murder, so to speak, is punished with death.* And what would happen if here in Paris, in our home district, an innocent man should be executed!"

"He is an escaped convict," said Monsieur Camusot, diffidently.

"The Opposition and the Press would make him a paschal lamb!" cried Monsieur de Granville; "and the Opposition would enjoy white-washing him, for he is a fanatical Corsican, full of his native notions, and his murders were a *Vendetta.* In that island you may kill your enemy, and think yourself, and be thought, a very good man.

"A thorough-paced magistrate, I tell you, is an unhappy man. They ought to live apart from all society, like the pontiffs of old. The world should never see them but at fixed hours, leaving their cells, grave, and old, and venerable, passing sentence like the high priests of antiquity, who combined in their person the functions of judicial and sacerdotal authority. We should be accessible only in our high seat.—As it is, we are to be seen every day, amused or unhappy, like other men. We are to be found in drawing-rooms and at home, as ordinary citizens, moved by our passions; and we seem, perhaps, more grotesque than terrible."

This bitter cry, broken by pauses and interjections, and emphasized by gestures which gave it an eloquence im-

*There are in penal servitude twenty-three parricides who have been allowed the benefit of *extenuating circumstances.*

possible to reduce to writing, made Camusot's blood run chill.

"And I, monsieur," said he, "began yesterday my apprenticeship to the sufferings of our calling.—I could have died of that young fellow's death. He misunderstood my wish to be lenient, and the poor wretch committed himself."

"Ah, you ought never to have examined him!" cried Monsieur de Granville; "it is so easy to oblige by doing nothing."

"And the law, monsieur?" replied Camusot. "He had been in custody two days."

"The mischief is done," said the public prosecutor. "I have done my best to remedy what is indeed irremediable. My carriage and servants are following the poor weak poet to the grave. Sérizy has sent his too; nay, more, he accepts the duty imposed on him by the unfortunate boy, and will act as his executor. By promising this to his wife he won from her a gleam of returning sanity. And Count Octave is attending the funeral in person."

"Well, then, Monsieur le Comte," said Camusot, "let us complete our work. We have a very dangerous man on our hands. He is Jacques Collin—and you know it as well as I do. The ruffian will be recognized——"

"Then we are lost!" cried Monsieur de Granville.

"He is at this moment shut up with your condemned murderer, who, on the hulks, was to him what Lucien has been in Paris—a favorite *protégé*. Bibi-Lupin, disguised as a gendarme, is watching the interview."

"What business has the superior police to interfere?" said the public prosecutor. "He has no business to act without my orders!"

"All the Conciergerie must know that we have caught Jacques Collin.—Well, I have come on purpose to tell you that this daring felon has in his possession the most compromising letters of Lucien's correspondence with Madame de Sérizy, the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, and Mademoiselle Clotilde de Grandlieu."

"Are you sure of that?" asked Monsieur de Granville, his face full of pained surprise.

"You shall hear, Monsieur le Comte, what reason I have to fear such a misfortune. When I untied the papers found in the young man's rooms, Jacques Collin gave a keen look at the parcel, and smiled with satisfaction in a way that no examining judge could misunderstand. So deep a villain as Jacques Collin takes good care not to let such a weapon slip through his fingers. What is to be said if these documents should be placed in the hands of counsel chosen by that rascal from among the foes of the government and the aristocracy!—My wife, to whom the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse has shown much kindness, is gone to warn her, and by this time they must be with the Grandlieus holding council."

"But we cannot possibly try the man!" cried the public prosecutor, rising and striding up and down the room. "He must have put the papers in some safe place——"

"I know where," said Camusot.

These words finally effaced every prejudice the public prosecutor had felt against him.

"Well, then——" said Monsieur de Granville, sitting down again.

"On my way here this morning I reflected deeply on this miserable business. Jacques Collin has an aunt—an aunt by nature, not putative—a woman concerning whom the superior police have communicated a report to the Préfecture. He is this woman's pupil and idol; she is his father's sister, her name Jacqueline Collin. This wretched woman carries on a trade as wardrobe purchaser, and by the connection this business has secured her she gets hold of many family secrets. If Jacques Collin has intrusted those papers, which would be his salvation, to any one's keeping, it is to that of this creature. Have her arrested."

The public prosecutor gave Camusot a keen look, as much as to say, "This man is not such a fool as I thought him; he is still young, and does not yet know how to handle the reins of justice."

"But," Camusot went on, "in order to succeed, we must give up all the plans we laid yesterday, and I came to take your advice—your orders——"

The public prosecutor took up his paper-knife and tapped it against the edge of the table with one of the tricky movement familiar to thoughtful men when they give themselves up to meditation.

"Three noble families involved!" he exclaimed. "We must not make the smallest blunder!—You are right: as a first step let us act on Fouché's principle, 'Arrest!'—and Jacques Collin must at once be sent back to the secret cells."

"That is to proclaim him a convict and to ruin Lucien's memory!"

"What a desperate business!" said Monsieur de Granville. "There is danger on every side."

At this instant the governor of the Conciergerie came in, not without knocking; and the private room of a public prosecutor is so well guarded, that only those concerned about the courts may even knock at the door.

"Monsieur le Comte," said Monsieur Gault, "the prisoner calling himself Carlos Herrera wishes to speak with you."

"Has he had communication with anybody?" asked Monsieur de Granville.

"With all the prisoners, for he has been out in the yard since about half-past seven. And he has seen the condemned man, who would seem to have talked to him."

A speech of Camusot's, which recurred to his mind like a flash of light, showed Monsieur de Granville all the advantage that might be taken of a confession of intimacy between Jacques Collin and Théodore Calvi to obtain the letters. The public prosecutor, glad to have an excuse for postponing the execution, beckoned Monsieur Gault to his side.

"I intend," said he, "to put off the execution till tomorrow; but let no one in the prison suspect it. Absolute silence! Let the executioner seem to be superintending the preparations.

"Send the Spanish priest here under a strong guard; the

Spanish Embassy claims his person! Gendarmes can bring up the self-styled Carlos by your back stairs so that he may see no one. Instruct the men each to hold him by one arm, and never let him go till they reach this door.

"Are you quite sure, Monsieur Gault, that this dangerous foreigner has spoken to no one but the prisoners!"

"Ah! just as he came out of the condemned cell a lady came to see him——"

The two magistrates exchanged looks, and such looks!

"What lady was that?" asked Camusot.

"One of his penitents—a Marquise," replied Gault.

"Worse and worse!" said Monsieur de Granville, looking at Camusot.

"She gave all the gendarmes and warders a sick headache," said Monsieur Gault, much puzzled.

"Nothing can be a matter of indifference in your business," said the public prosecutor. "The Conciergerie has not such tremendous walls for nothing. How did this lady get in?"

"With a regular permit, monsieur," replied the governor. "The lady, beautifully dressed, in a fine carriage with a footman and a *chasseur,* came to see her confessor before going to the funeral of the poor young man whose body you had had removed."

"Bring me the order for admission," said Monsieur de Granville.

"It was given on the recommendation of the Comte de Sérizy."

"What was the woman like?" asked the public prosecutor.

"She seemed to be a lady."

"Did you see her face?"

"She wore a black veil."

"What did they say to each other?"

"Well—a pious person, with a prayer-book in her hand—what could she say? She asked the Abbé's blessing and went on her knees."

"Did they talk together a long time?"

"Not five minutes; but we none of us understood what they said; they spoke Spanish no doubt."

"Tell us everything, monsieur," the public prosecutor insisted. "I repeat, the very smallest detail is to us of the first importance. Let this be a caution to you."

"She was crying, monsieur."

"Really weeping?"

"That we could not see, she hid her face in her handkerchief. She left three hundred francs in gold for the prisoners."

"That was not she!" said Camusot.

"Bibi-Lupin at once said, 'She is a thief!' " said Monsieur Gault.

"He knows the tribe," said Monsieur de Granville.—"Get out your warrant," he added, turning to Camusot, "and have seals placed on everything in her house—at once! But how can she have got hold of Monsieur de Sérizy's recommendation?—Bring me the order—and go, Monsieur Gault; send me that Abbé immediately. So long as we have him safe, the danger cannot be greater. And in the course of two hours' talk you get a long way into a man's mind."

"Especially such a public prosecutor as you are," said Camusot insidiously.

"There will be two of us," replied Monsieur de Granville politely.

And he became discursive once more.

"There ought to be created for every prison parlor, a post of superintendent, to be given with a good salary to the cleverest and most energetic police officers," said he, after a long pause. "Bibi-Lupin ought to end his days in such a place. Then we should have an eye and an ear on the watch in a department that needs closer supervision than it gets.—Monsieur Gault could tell us nothing positive."

"He has so much to do," said Camusot. "Still, between these secret cells and us there lies a gap which ought not to exist. On the way from the Conciergerie to the judges' rooms there are passages, courtyards, and stairs. The attention of the agents cannot be unflagging, whereas the prisoner is always alive to his own affairs.

"I was told that a lady had already placed herself in the way of Jacques Collin when he was brought up from the cells to be examined. That woman got into the guardroom at the top of the narrow stairs from the mousetrap; the ushers told me, and I blamed the gendarmes."

"Oh! the Palais needs entire reconstruction," said Monsieur de Granville. "But it is an outlay of twenty to thirty million francs! Just try asking the Chambers for thirty millions for the more decent accommodation of Justice."

The sound of many footsteps and a clatter of arms fell on their ear. It would be Jacques Collin.

The public prosecutor assumed a mask of gravity that hid the man. Camusot imitated his chief.

The office-boy opened the door, and Jacques Collin came in, quite calm and unmoved.

"You wished to speak to me," said Monsieur de Granville. "I am ready to listen."

"Monsieur le Comte, I am Jacques Collin. I surrender!"

Camusot started; the public prosecutor was immovable.

"As you may suppose, I have my reasons for doing this," said Jacques Collin, with an ironical glance at the two magistrates. "I must inconvenience you greatly; for if I had remained a Spanish priest, you would simply have packed me off with an escort of gendarmes as far as the frontier by Bayonne, and there Spanish bayonets would have relieved you of me."

The lawyers sat silent and imperturbable.

"Monsieur le Comte," the convict went on, "the reasons which have led me to this step are yet more pressing than this, but devilish personal to myself. I can tell them to no one but you.—If you are afraid——"

"Afraid of whom? Of what?" said the Comte de Granville.

In attitude and expression, in the turn of his head, his demeanor and his look, this distinguished judge was at this moment a living embodiment of the law which ought to supply us with the noblest examples of civic courage. In this brief

instant he was on a level with the magistrates of the old French *Parlement* in the time of the civil wars, when the presidents found themselves face to face with death, and stood, made of marble, like the statues that commemorate them.

"Afraid to be alone with an escaped convict!"

"Leave us, Monsieur Camusot," said the public prosecutor at once.

"I was about to suggest that you should bind me hand and foot," Jacques Collin coolly added, with an ominous glare at the two gentlemen. He paused, and then said with great gravity:

"Monsieur le Comte, you had my esteem, but you now command my admiration."

"Then you think you are formidable?" said the magistrate, with a look of supreme contempt.

"*Think* myself formidable?" retorted the convict. "Why think about it? I am, and I know it."

Jacques Collin took a chair and sat down, with all the ease of a man who feels himself a match for his adversary in an interview where they would treat on equal terms.

At this instant Monsieur Camusot, who was on the point of closing the door behind him, turned back, came up to Monsieur de Granville, and handed him two folded papers.

"Look!" said he to Monsieur de Granville, pointing to one of them.

"Call back Monsieur Gault!" cried the Comte de Granville, as he read the name of Madame de Maufrigneuse's maid—a woman he knew.

The governor of the prison came in.

"Describe the woman who came to see the prisoner," said the public prosecutor in his ear.

"Short, thick-set, fat, and square," replied Monsieur Gault.

"The woman to whom this permit was given is tall and thin," said Monsieur de Granville. "How old was she?"

"About sixty."

"This concerns me, gentlemen?" said Jacques Collin.

"Come, do not puzzle your heads. That person is my aunt, a very plausible aunt, a woman, and an old woman. I can save you a great deal of trouble. You will never find my aunt unless I choose. If we beat about the bush, we shall never get forwarder."

"Monsieur l'Abbé has lost his Spanish accent," observed Monsieur Gault; "he does not speak broken French."

"Because things are in a desperate mess, my dear Monsieur Gault," replied Jacques Collin with a bitter smile, as he addressed the Governor by name.

Monsieur Gault went quickly up to his chief, and said in a whisper, "Beware of that man, Monsieur le Comte; he is mad with rage."

Monsieur de Granville gazed slowly at Jacques Collin, and saw that he was controlling himself; but he saw, too, that what the governor said was true. This treacherous demeanor covered the cold but terrible nervous irritation of a savage. In Jacques Collin's eyes were the lurid fires of a volcanic eruption, his fists were clenched. He was a tiger gathering himself up to spring.

"Leave us," said the Count gravely to the prison governor and the judge.

"You did wisely to send away Lucien's murderer!" said Jacques Collin, without caring whether Camusot heard him or no; "I could not contain myself, I should have strangled him."

Monsieur de Granville felt a chill; never had he seen a man's eyes so full of blood, or cheeks so colorless, or muscles so set.

"And what good would that murder have done you?" he quietly asked.

"You avenge society, or fancy you avenge it, every day, monsieur, and you ask me to give a reason for revenge? Have you never felt vengeance throbbing in surges in your veins? Don't you know that it was that idiot of a judge who killed him?—For you were fond of my Lucien, and he loved you! I know you by heart, sir. The dear boy would tell me

everything at night when he came in; I used to put him to bed as a nurse tucks up a child, and I made him tell me everything. He confided everything to me, even his least sensations!

"The best of mothers never loved an only son so tenderly as I loved that angel! If only you knew! All that is good sprang up in his heart as flowers grow in the fields. He was weak; it was his only fault, weak as the string of a lyre, which is so strong when it is taut. These are the most beautiful natures; their weakness is simply tenderness, admiration, the power of expanding in the sunshine of art, of love, of the beauty God has made for man in a thousand shapes!—In short, Lucien was a woman spoiled. Oh! what could I not say to that brute beast who has just gone out of the room!

"I tell you, monsieur, in my degree, as a prisoner before his judge, I did what God A'mighty would have done for His Son if, hoping to save Him, He had gone with Him before Pilate!"

A flood of tears fell from the convict's light tawny eyes, which just now had glared like those of a wolf starved by six months' snow in the plains of the Ukraine. He went on:

"That dolt would listen to nothing, and he killed the boy!—I tell you, sir, I bathed the child's corpse in my tears, crying out to the Power I do not know, and which is above us all! I, who do not believe in God!—(For if I were not a materialist, I should not be myself.)

"I have told everything when I say that. You don't know—no man knows what suffering is. I alone know it. The fire of anguish so dried up my tears, that all last night I could not weep. Now I can, because I feel that you can understand me. I saw you, sitting there just now, an Image of Justice. Oh! monsieur, may God—for I am beginning to believe in Him—preserve you from ever being as bereft as I am! That cursed judge has robbed me of my soul, Monsieur le Comte! At this moment they are burying my life, my beauty, my virtue, my conscience, all my powers! Imagine a dog from which a chemist had extracted the blood.—That's me! I am that dog——

"And that is why I have come to tell you that I am Jacques Collin, and to give myself up. I made up my mind to it this morning when they came and carried away the body I was kissing like a madman—like a mother—as the Virgin must have kissed Jesus in the tomb.

"I meant then to give myself up to justice without driving any bargain; but now I must make one, and you shall know why."

"Are you speaking to the judge or to Monsieur de Granville?" asked the magistrate.

The two men, Crime and Law, looked at each other. The magistrate had been strongly moved by the convict; he felt a sort of divine pity for the unhappy wretch; he understood what his life and feelings were. And besides, the magistrate —for a magistrate is always a magistrate—knowing nothing of Jacques Collin's career since his escape from prison, fancied that he could impress the criminal who, after all, had only been sentenced for forgery. He would try the effect of generosity on this nature, a compound, like bronze, of various elements, of good and evil.

Again, Monsieur de Granville, who had reached the age of fifty-three without ever having been loved, admired a tender soul, as all men do who have not been beloved. This despair, the lot of many men to whom women can only give esteem and friendship, was perhaps the unknown bond on which the strong intimacy was based that united the Comtes de Bauvan, de Granville, and de Sérizy; for a common misfortune brings souls into unison quite as much as a common joy.

"You have the future before you," said the public prosecutor, with an inquisitorial glance at the dejected villain.

The man only expressed by a shrug the utmost indifference to his fate.

"Lucien made a will by which he leave you three hundred thousand francs."

"Poor, poor chap! poor boy!" cried Jacques Collin. "Always too honest! I was all wickedness, while he was good-

ness—noble, beautiful, sublime! Such lovely souls cannot be spoiled. He had taken nothing from me but my money, sir."

This utter and complete surrender of his individuality, which the magistrate vainly strove to rally, so thoroughly proved his dreadful words, that Monsieur de Granville was won over to the criminal. The public prosecutor remained!

"If you really care for nothing," said Monsieur de Granville, "what did you want to say to me?"

"Well, is it not something that I have given myself up? You were getting warm, but you had not got me; besides, you would not have known what to do with me——"

"What an antagonist!" said the magistrate to himself.

"Monsieur le Comte, you are about to cut off the head of an innocent man, and I have discovered the culprit," said Jacques Collin, wiping away his tears. "I have come here not for their sakes, but for yours. I have come to spare you remorse, for I love all who took an interest in Lucien, just as I will give my hatred full play against all who helped to cut off his life—men or women!

"What can a convict more or less matter to me?" he went on, after a short pause. "A convict is no more in my eyes than an emmet is in yours. I am like the Italian brigands—fine men they are! If a traveler is worth ever so little more than the charge of their musket, they shoot him dead.

"I thought only of you.—I got the young man to make a clean breast of it; he was bound to trust me, we had been chained together. Théodore is very good stuff; he thought he was doing his mistress a good turn by undertaking to sell or pawn the stolen goods; but he is no more guilty of the Nanterre job than you are. He is a Corsican; it is their way to revenge themselves and kill each other like flies. In Italy and Spain a man's life is not respected, and the reason is plain. There we are believed to have a soul in our own image, which survives us and lives for ever. Tell that to your analyst! It is only among atheistical or philosophical nations that those who mar human life are made to pay so dearly; and with reason from their point of view—a belief only in matter and in the present.

"If Calvi had told you who the woman was from whom he obtained the stolen goods, you would not have found the real murderer; he is already in your hands; but his accomplice, whom poor Théodore will not betray because she is a woman—— Well, every calling has its point of honor; convicts and thieves have theirs!

"Now, I know the murderer of those two women and the inventors of that bold, strange plot; I have been told every detail. Postpone Calvi's execution, and you shall know all; but you must give me your word that he shall be sent safe back to the hulks and his punishment commuted. A man so miserable as I am does not take the trouble to lie—you know that. What I have told you is the truth."

"To you, Jacques Collin, though it is degrading Justice, which ought never to condescend to such a compromise, I believe I may relax the rigidity of my office and refer the case to my superiors."

"Will you grant me this life?"

"Possibly."

"Monsieur, I implore you to give me your word; it will be enough."

Monsieur Granville drew himself up with offended pride.

"I hold in my hand the honor of three families, and you only the lives of three convicts in yours," said Jacques Collin. "I have the stronger hand."

"But you may be sent back to the dark cells: then, what will you do?" said the public prosecutor.

"Oh! we are to play the game out then!" said Jacques Collin. "I was speaking as man to man—I was talking to Monsieur de Granville. But if the public prosecutor is my adversary, I take up the cards and hold them close.—And if only you had given me your word, I was ready to give you back the letters that Mademoiselle Clotilde de Grandlieu——"

This was said with a tone, an audacity, and a look which showed Monsieur de Granville that against such an adversary the least blunder was dangerous.

"And is that all you ask?" said the magistrate.

"I will speak for myself now," said Jacques. "The honor of the Grandlieu family is to pay for the commutation of Théodore's sentence. It is giving much to get very little. For what is a convict in penal servitude for life? If he escapes, you can so easily settle the score. It is drawing a bill on the guillotine! Only, as he was consigned to Rochefort with no amiable intentions, you must promise me that he shall be quartered at Toulon, and well treated there.

"Now, for myself, I want something more. I have the packets of letters from Madame de Sérizy and Madame de Maufrigneuse.—And what letters!—I tell you, Monsieur le Comte, prostitutes, when they write letters, assume a style of sentiment; well, sir, fine ladies, who are accustomed to style and sentiment all day long, write as prostitutes behave. Philosophers may know the reasons for this contrariness. I do not care to seek them. Woman is an inferior animal; she is ruled by her instincts. To my mind, a woman has no beauty who is not like a man.

"So your smart duchesses, who are men in brains only, write masterpieces. Oh! they are splendid from beginning to end, like Piron's famous ode!——"

"Indeed!"

"Would you like to see them?" said Jacques Collin, with a laugh.

The magistrate felt ashamed.

"I cannot give them to you to read. But, there; no nonsense; this is business and all above board, I suppose?—You must give me back the letters, and allow no one to play the spy or to follow or to watch the person who will bring them to me."

"That will take time," said Monsieur de Granville.

"No. It is half-past nine," replied Jacques Collin, looking at the clock; "well, in four minutes you will have a letter from each of these ladies, and after reading them you will countermand the guillotine. If matters were not as they are, you would not see me taking things so easy.—The ladies

indeed have had warning."—Monsieur de Granville was startled.—"They must be making a stir by now; they are going to bring the Keeper of the Seals into the fray—they may even appeal to the King, who knows?—Come, now, will you give me your word that you will forget all that has passed, and neither follow, nor send any one to follow, that person for a whole hour?"

"I promise it."

"Very well; you are not the man to deceive an escaped convict. You are a chip of the block of which Turennes and Condés are made, and would keep your word to a thief.—In the Salle des Pas-Perdus there is at this moment a beggar woman in rags, an old woman, in the very middle of the hall. She is probably gossiping with one of the public writers, about some lawsuit over a party-wall perhaps; send your office messenger to fetch her, saying these words, '*Dabor ti Mandana*' (the Boss wants you). She will come.

"But do not be unnecessarily cruel. Either you accept my terms or you do not choose to be mixed up in a business with a convict.—I am only a forger, you will remember!—Well, do not leave Calvi to go through the terrors of preparation for the scaffold."

"I have already countermanded the execution," said Monsieur de Granville to Jacques Collin. "I would not have Justice beneath you in dignity."

Jacques Collin looked at the public prosecutor with a sort of amazement, and saw him ring his bell.

"Will you promise not to escape? Give me your word, and I shall be satisfied. Go and fetch the woman."

The office boy came in.

"Félix, send away the gendarmes," said Monsieur de Granville.

Jacques Collin was conquered.

In this duel with the magistrate he had tried to be the superior, the stronger, the more magnanimous, and the magistrate had crushed him. At the same time, the convict felt himself the superior, inasmuch as he had tricked the Law; he

had convinced it that the guilty man was innocent, and had fought for a man's head and won it; but this advantage must be unconfessed, secret and hidden, while the magistrate towered above him majestically in the eye of day.

As Jacques Collin left Monsieur de Granville's room, the Comte des Lupeaulx, Secretary-in-Chief of the President of the Council, and a deputy, made his appearance, and with him a feeble-looking, little old man. This individual, wrapped in a puce-colored overcoat, as though it were still winter, with powdered hair, and a cold, pale face, had a gouty gait, unsteady on feet that were shod with loose calfskin boots; leaning on a gold-headed cane, he carried his hat in his hand, and wore a row of seven orders in his button-hole.

"What is it, my dear des Lupeaulx?" asked the public prosecutor.

"I come from the Prince," replied the Count, in a low voice. "You have *carte blanche* if you can only get the letters—Madame de Sérizy's, Madame de Maufrigneuse's and Mademoiselle Clotilde de Grandlieu's. You may come to some arrangement with this gentleman——"

"Who is he?" asked Monsieur de Granville, in a whisper.

"There are no secrets between you and me, my dear sir," said des Lupeaulx. "This is the famous Corentin. His Majesty desires that you will yourself tell him all the details of this affair and the conditions of success."

"Do me the kindness," replied the public prosecutor, "of going to tell the Prince that the matter is settled, that I have not needed this gentleman's assistance," and he turned to Corentin. "I will wait on His Majesty for his commands with regard to the last steps in the matter, which will lie with the Keeper of the Seals, as two reprieves will need signing."

"You have been wise to take the initiative," said des Lupeaulx, shaking hands with the Comte de Granville. "On the very eve of a great undertaking the King is most anxious that the peers and the great families should not be shown up,

blown upon. It ceases to be a low criminal case; it becomes an affair of State."

"But tell the Prince that by the time you came it was all settled."

"Really!"

"I believe so."

"Then you, my dear fellow, will be Keeper of the Seals as soon as the present Keeper is made Chancellor——"

"I have no ambition," replied the magistrate.

Des Lupeaulx laughed, and went away.

"Beg of the Prince to request the King to grant me ten minutes' audience at about half-past two," added Monsieur de Granville, as he accompanied the Comte des Lupeaulx to the door.

"So you are not ambitious!" said des Lupeaulx, with a keen look at Monsieur de Granville. "Come, you have two children, you would like at least to be made peer of France."

"If you have the letters, Monsieur le Procureur Général, my intervention is unnecessary," said Corentin, finding himself alone with Monsieur de Granville, who looked at him with very natural curiosity.

"Such a man as you can never be superfluous in so delicate a case," replied the magistrate, seeing that Corentin had heard or guessed everything.

Corentin bowed with a patronizing air.

"Do you know the man in question, monsieur?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Comte, it is Jacques Collin, the head of the 'Ten Thousand Francs Association,' the banker for three penal settlements, a convict who, for the last five years, has succeeded in concealing himself under the robe of the Abbé Carlos Herrera. How he ever came to be intrusted with a mission to the late King from the King of Spain is a question which we have all puzzled ourselves with trying to answer. I am now expecting information from Madrid, whither I have sent notes and a man. That convict holds the secrets of two kings."

"He is a man of mettle and temper. We have only two

courses open to us," said the public prosecutor. "We must secure his fidelity, or get him out of the way."

"The same idea has struck us both, and that is a great honor for me," said Corentin. "I am obliged to have so many ideas, and for so many people, that out of them all I ought occasionally to meet a clever man."

He spoke so drily, and in so icy a tone, that Monsieur de Granville made no reply, and proceeded to attend to some pressing matters.

Mademoiselle Jacqueline Collin's amazement on seeing Jacques Collin in the Salle des Pas-Perdus is beyond imagining. She stood square on her feet, her hands on her hips, for she was dressed as a costermonger. Accustomed as she was to her nephew's conjuring tricks, this beat everything.

"Well, if you are going to stare at me as if I were a natural history show," said Jacques Collin, taking his aunt by the arm and leading her out of the hall, "we shall be taken for a pair of curious specimens; they may take us into custody, and then we should lose time."

And he went down the stairs of the Galerie Marchande leading to the Rue de la Barillerie. "Where is Paccard?"

"He is waiting for me at la Rousse's, walking up and down the flower market."

"And Prudence?"

"Also at her house, as my god-daughter."

"Let us go there."

"Look round and see if we are watched."

La Rousse, a hardware dealer living on the Quai aux Fleurs, was the widow of a famous murderer, one of the "Ten Thousand." In 1819, Jacques Collin had faithfully handed over twenty thousand francs and odd to this woman from her lover, after he had been executed. Trompe-la-Mort was the only person who knew of his pal's connection with the girl, at that time a milliner.

"I am your young man's boss," the boarder at Madame Vauquer's had told her, having sent for her to meet him at the Jardin des Plantes. "He may have mentioned me to you,

my dear.—Any one who plays me false dies within a year; on the other hand, those who are true to me have nothing to fear from me. I am staunch through thick and thin, and would die without saying a word that would compromise anybody I wish well to. Stick to me as a soul sticks to the Devil, and you will find the benefit of it. I promised your poor Auguste that you should be happy; he wanted to make you a rich woman, and he got scragged for your sake.

"Don't cry; listen to me. No one in the world knows that you were mistress to a convict, to the murderer they choked off last Saturday; and I shall never tell. You are two-and-twenty, and pretty, and you have twenty-six thousand francs of your own; forget Auguste and get married; be an honest woman if you can. In return for peace and quiet, I only ask you to serve me now and then, me, and any one I may send you, but without stopping to think. I will never ask you to do anything that can get you into trouble, you or your children, or your husband, if you get one, or your family.

"In my line of life I often want a safe place to talk in or to hide in. Or I may want a trusty woman to carry a letter or do an errand. You will be one of my letter-boxes, one of my porters' lodges, one of my messengers, neither more nor less.

"You are too red-haired; Auguste and I used to call you la Rousse; you can keep that name. My aunt, an old-clothes dealer at the Temple, who will come and see you, is the only person in the world you are to obey; tell her everything that happens to you; she will find you a husband, and be very useful to you."

And thus the bargain was struck, a diabolical compact like that which had for so long bound Prudence Servien to Jacques Collin, and which the man never failed to tighten; for, like the Devil, he had a passion for recruiting.

In about 1821 Jacques Collin found la Rousse a husband in the person of the chief shopman under a rich wholesale tin merchant. This head-clerk, having purchased his master's house of business, was now a prosperous man, the father of

two children, and one of the district Maire's deputies. La Rousse, now Madame Prélard, had never had the smallest ground for complaint, either of Jacques Collin or of his aunt; still, each time she was required to help them, Madame Prélard quaked in every limb. So, as she saw the terrible couple come into her shop, she turned as pale as death.

"We want to speak to you on business, madame," said Jacques Collin.

"My husband is in there," said she.

"Very well; we have no immediate need of you. I never put people out of their way for nothing."

"Send for a hackney coach, my dear," said Jacqueline Collin, "and tell my god-daughter to come down. I hope to place her as maid to a very great lady, and the steward of the house will take us there."

A shop-boy fetched the coach, and a few minutes later Europe, or, to be rid of the name under which she had served Esther, Prudence Servien, Paccard, Jacques Collin, and his aunt, were, to la Rousse's great joy, packed into a coach, ordered by Trompe-la-Mort to drive to the Barrière d'Ivry.

Prudence and Paccard, quaking in presence of the boss, felt like guilty souls in the presence of God.

"Where are the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs?" asked the boss, looking at them with the clear, penetrating gaze which so effectually curdled the blood of these tools of his, these *âmes damnées,* when they were caught tripping, that they felt as though their scalp were set with as many pins as hairs.

"The seven hundred and *thirty* thousand francs," said Jaqueline Collin to her nephew, "are quite safe; I gave them to la Romette this morning in a sealed packet."

"If you had not handed them over to Jacqueline," said Trompe-la-Mort, "you would have gone straight there," and he pointed to the Place de Grève, which they were just passing.

Prudence Servien, in her country fashion, made the sign of the Cross, as if she had seen a thunderbolt fall.

"I forgive you," said the boss, "on condition of your committing no more mistakes of this kind, and of your being henceforth to me what these two fingers are of my right hand," and he pointed to the first and middle fingers, "for this good woman is the thumb," and he slapped his aunt on the shoulder.

"Listen to me," he went on. "You, Paccard, have nothing more to fear; you may follow your nose about *Pantin* (Paris) as you please. I give you leave to marry Prudence Servien."

Paccard took Jacques Collin's hand and kissed it respectfully.

"And what must I do?" said he.

"Nothing; and you will have dividends and women, to say nothing of your wife—for you have a touch of the Regency about you, old boy!—That comes of being such a fine man!"

Paccard colored under his sultan's ironical praises.

"You, Prudence," Jacques went on, "will want a career, a position, a future; you must remain in my service. Listen to me. There is a very good house in the Rue Sainte-Barbe belonging to that Madame de Saint-Estève, whose name my aunt occasionally borrows. It is a very good business, with plenty of custom, bringing in fifteen to twenty thousand francs a year. Saint-Estève puts a woman in to keep the shop——"

"La Gonore," said Jacqueline.

"Poor la Pouraille's moll," said Paccard. "That is where I bolted to with Europe the day that poor Madame van Bogseck died, our mis'ess."

"Who jabbers when I am speaking?" said Jacques Collin.

Perfect silence fell in the coach. Paccard and Prudence did not dare look at each other.

"The shop is kept by la Gonore," Jacques Collin went on. "If that is where you went to hide with Prudence, I see, Paccard, that you have wit enough to dodge the reelers (mislead the police), but not enough to puzzle the old lady," and he stroked his aunt's chin. "Now I see how she managed to find you.—It all fits beautifully. You may go back to la

Gonore.—To go on: Jacqueline will arrange with Madame Nourrisson to purchase her business in the Rue Sainte-Barbe; and if you manage well, child, you may make a fortune out of it," he said to Prudence. "An Abbess at your age! It is worthy of a Daughter of France," he added in a hard tone.

Prudence flung her arms round Trompe-la-Mort's neck and hugged him; but the boss flung her off with a sharp blow, showing his extraordinary strength, and but for Paccard, the girl's head would have struck and broken the coach window.

"Paws off! I don't like such ways," said the boss stiffly. "It is disrespectful to me."

"He is right, child," said Paccard. "Why, you see, it is as though the boss had made you a present of a hundred thousand francs. The shop is worth that. It is on the Boulevard, opposite the Gymnase. The people come out of the theatre——"

"I will do more," said Trompe-la-Mort; "I will buy the house."

"And in six years we shall be millionaires," cried Paccard.

Tired of being interrupted, Trompe-la-Mort gave Paccard's shin a kick hard enough to break it; but the man's tendons were of india-rubber, and his bones of wrought iron.

"All right, boss, mum it is," said he.

"Do you think I am cramming you with lies?" said Jacques Collin, perceiving that Paccard had had a few drops too much. "Well, listen. In the cellar of that house there are two hundred and fifty thousand francs in gold——"

Again silence reigned in the coach.

"The coin is in a very hard bed of masonry. It must be got out, and you have only three nights to do it in. Jacqueline will help you.—A hundred thousand francs will buy up the business, fifty thousand will pay for the business, leave the remainder."

"Where?" said Paccard.

"In the cellar?" asked Prudence.

"Silence!" cried Jacqueline.

"Yes, but to get the business transferred, we must have the consent of the police authorities," Paccard objected.

"We shall have it," said Trompe-la-Mort. "Don't meddle in what does not concern you."

Jacqueline looked at her nephew, and was struck by the alteration in his face, visible through the stern mask under which the strong man generally hid his feelings.

"You, child," said he to Prudence Servien, "will receive from my aunt the seven hundred and fifty thousand francs——"

"Seven hundred and thirty," said Paccard.

"Very good, seven hundred and thirty then," said Jacques Collin. "You must return this evening under some pretext to Madame Lucien's house. Get out on the roof through the skylight; get down the chimney into your mis'ess' room, and hide the packet she had made of the money in the mattress——"

"And why not by the door?" asked Prudence Servien.

"Idiot! there are seals on everything," replied Jacques Collin. "In a few days the inventory will be taken, and you will be innocent of the theft."

"Good for the boss!" cried Paccard. "That is really kind!"

"Stop, coachman!" said Jacques Collin's powerful voice.

The coach was close to the stand by the Jarden des Plantes.

"Be off, young 'uns," said Jacques Collin, "and do nothing silly! Be on the Pont des Arts this afternoon at five, and my aunt will let you know if there are any orders to the contrary.—We must be prepared for everything," he whispered to his aunt. "To-morrow," he went on, "Jacqueline will tell you how to dig up the gold without any risk. It is a ticklish job——"

Paccard and Prudence jumped out on to the King's highway, as happy as reprieved thieves.

"What a good fellow the boss is!" said Paccard.

"He would be the king of men if he were not so rough on women."

"Oh, yes! He is a sweet creature," said Paccard. "Did you see how he kicked me? Well, we deserved to be sent to old Nick; for, after all, we got him into this scrape."

"If only he does not drag us into some dirty job, and get us packed off to the hulks yet," said the wily Prudence.

"Not he! If he had that in his head, he would tell us; you don't know him.—He has provided handsomely for you. Here we are, citizens at large! Oh, when that man takes a fancy to you, he has not his match for good-nature."

"Now, my jewel," said Jacques Collin to his aunt, "you must take la Gonore in hand; she must be humbugged. Five days hence she will be taken into custody, and a hundred and fifty thousand francs will be found in her rooms, the remains of a share from the robbery and murder of the old Crottat couple, the notary's father and mother."

"She will get five years in the Madelonnettes," said Jacqueline.

"That's about it," said the nephew. "This will be a reason for old Nourrisson to get rid of her house; she cannot manage it herself, and a manager to suit is not to be found every day. You can arrange all that. We shall have a sharp eye there.—But all these three things are secondary to the business I have undertaken with regard to our letters. So unrip your gown and give me the samples of the goods. Where are the three packets?"

"At la Rousse's, of course."

"Coachman," cried Jacques Collin, "go back to the Palais de Justice, and look sharp——

"I promised to be quick, and I have been gone half an hour; that is too much.—Stay at la Rousse's, and give the sealed parcels to the office clerk, who will come and ask for Madame *de* Saint-Estève; the *de* will be the password. He will say to you, 'Madame, I have come from the public prosecutor for the things you know of.' Stand waiting outside the door, staring about at what is going on in the Flower-Market, so as not to arouse Prélard's suspicions. As soon as you have given up the letters, you can start Paccard and Prudence."

"I see what you are at," said Jacqueline; "you mean to step into Bibi-Lupin's shoes. That boy's death has turned your brain."

"And there is Théodore, who was just going to have his hair cropped to be scragged at four this afternoon!" cried Jacques Collin.

"Well, it is a notion! We shall end our days as honest folks in a fine property and a delightful climate—in Touraine."

"What was to become of me? Lucien has taken my soul with him, and all my joy in life. I have thirty years before me to be sick of life in, and I have no heart left. Instead of being the boss of the hulks, I shall be a Figaro of the law, and avenge Lucien. I can never be sure of demolishing Corentin excepting in the skin of a police agent. And so long as I have a man to devour, I shall still feel alive.—The profession a man follows in the eyes of the world is a mere sham; the reality is in the idea!" he added, striking his forehead.—"How much have we left in the cash-box?" he asked.

"Nothing," said his aunt, dismayed by the man's tone and manner. "I gave you all I had for the boy. La Romette has not more than twenty thousand francs left in the business. I took everything from Madame Nourrisson; she had about sixty thousand francs of her own. Oh! we are lying in sheets that have not been washed this twelve months past. That boy had all the pals' blunt, our savings, and all old Nourrisson's."

"Making——?"

"Five hundred and sixty thousand."

"We have a hundred and fifty thousand which Paccard and Prudence will pay us. I will tell you where to find two hundred thousand more. The remainder will come to me out of Esther's money. We must repay old Nourrisson. With Théodore, Paccard, Prudence, Nourrisson, and you, I shall soon have the holy alliance I require.—Listen, now, we are nearly there——"

"Here are the three letters," said Jacqueline, who had finished unsewing the lining of her gown.

"Quite right," said Jacques Collin, taking the three precious documents—autograph letters on vellum paper, and still strongly scented. "Théodore did the Nanterre job."

"Oh! it was he."

"Don't talk. Time is precious. He wanted to give the proceeds to a little Corsican sparrow named Ginetta. You must set old Nourrisson to find her; I will give you the necessary information in a letter which Gault will give you. Come for it to the gate of the Conciergerie in two hours' time. You must place the girl with a washerwoman, Godet's sister; she must seem at home there. Godet and Ruffard were concerned with la Pouraille in robbing and murdering the Crottats.

"The four hundred and fifty thousand francs are all safe, one-third in la Gonore's cellar—la Pouraille's share; the second third in la Gonore's bedroom, which is Ruffard's; and the rest is hidden in Godet's sister's house. We will begin by taking a hundred and fifty thousand francs out of la Pouraille's whack, a hundred thousand of Godet's, and a hundred thousand of Ruffard's. As soon as Godet and Ruffard are nabbed, they will be supposed to have got rid of what is missing from their shares. And I will make Godet believe that I have saved a hundred thousand francs for him, and that la Gonore has done the same for la Pouraille and Ruffard.

"Prudence and Paccard will do the job at la Gonore's; you and Ginetta—who seems to be a smart hussy—must manage the job at Godet's sister's place.

"And so, as the first act in the farce, I can enable the public prosecutor to lay his hand on four hundred thousand francs stolen from the Crottats, and on the guilty parties. Then I shall seem to have shown up the Nanterre murderer. We shall get back our shiners, and are behind the scenes with the police. We were the game, now we are the hunters—that is all.

"Give the driver three francs."

The coach was at the Palais. Jacqueline, speechless with

astonishment, paid. Trompe-la-Mort went up the steps to the public prosecutor's room.

A complete change of life is so violent a crisis, that Jacques Collin, in spite of his resolution, mounted the steps but slowly, going up from the Rue de la Barillerie to the Galerie Marchande, where, under the gloomy peristyle of the court-house, is the entrance to the Court itself.

Some civil case was going on which had brought a little crowd together at the foot of the double stairs leading to the Assize Court, so that the convict, lost in thought, stood for some minutes, checked by the throng.

To the left of this double flight is one of the mainstays of the building, like an enormous pillar, and in this tower is a little door. This door opens on a spiral staircase down to the Conciergerie, to which the public prosecutor, the governor of the prison, the presiding judges, King's council, and the chief of the Safety department have access by this back way.

It was up a side staircase from this, now walled up, that Marie Antoinette, the Queen of France, was led before the Revolutionary tribunal which sat, as we all know, in the great hall where appeals are now heard before the Supreme Court. The heart sinks within us at the sight of these dreadful steps, when we think that Marie Thérèse's daughter, whose suite, and head-dress, and hoops filled the great staircase at Versailles, once passed that way! Perhaps it was in expiation of her mother's crime—the atrocious division of Poland. The sovereigns who commit such crimes evidently never think of the retribution to be exacted by Providence.

When Jacques Collin went up the vaulted stairs to the public prosecutor's room, Bibi-Lupin was just coming out of the little door in the wall.

The chief of the "Safety" had come from the Conciergerie, and was also going up to Monsieur de Granville. It was easy to imagine Bibi-Lupin's surprise when he recognized, in front of him, the gown of Carlos Herrera, which he had so thoroughly studied that morning; he ran on to pass him. Jacques Collin

turned round, and the enemies were face to face. Each stood still, and the self-same look flashed in both pairs of eyes, so different in themselves, as in a duel two pistols go off at the same instant.

"This time I have got you, rascal!" said the chief of the Safety Department.

"Ah, ha!" replied Jacques Collin ironically.

It flashed through his mind that Monsieur de Granville had sent some one to watch him, and, strange to say, it pained him to think the magistrate less magnanimous than he had supposed.

Bibi-Lupin bravely flew at Jacques Collin's throat; but he, keeping his eye on the foe, gave him a straight blow, and sent him sprawling on his back three yards off; then Trompe-la-Mort went calmly up to Bibi-Lupin, and held out a hand to help him to rise, exactly like an English boxer who, sure of his superiority, is ready for more. Bibi-Lupin knew better than to call out; but he sprang to his feet, ran to the entrance to the passage, and signed to a gendarme to stand on guard. Then, swift as lightning, he came back to the foe, who quietly looked on. Jacques Collin had decided what to do.

"Either the public prosecutor has broken his word, or he has not taken Bibi-Lupin into his confidence, and in that case I must get the matter explained," thought he.—"Do you mean to arrest me?" he asked his enemy. "Say so without more ado. Don't I know that in the heart of this place you are stronger than I am? I could kill you with a well-placed kick, but I could not tackle the gendarmes and the soldiers. Now, make no noise. Where do you want to take me?"

"To Monsieur Camusot."

"Come along to Monsieur Camusot," replied Jacques Collin. "Why should we not go to the public prosecutor's court? It is nearer," he added.

Bibi-Lupin, who knew that he was out of favor with the upper ranks of judicial authorities, and suspected of having made a fortune at the expense of criminals and their victims,

was not unwilling to show himself in Court with so notable a capture.

"All right, we will go there," said he. "But as you surrender, allow me to fit you with bracelets. I am afraid of your claws."

And he took the handcuffs out of his pocket.

Jacques Collin held out his hands, and Bibi-Lupin snapped on the manacles.

"Well, now, since you are feeling so good," said he, "tell me how you got out of the Conciergerie?"

"By the way you came; down the turret stairs."

"Then have you taught the gendarmes some new trick?"

"No, Monsieur de Granville let me out on parole."

"You are gammoning me?"

"You will see. Perhaps it will be your turn to wear the bracelets."

Just then Corentin was saying to Monsieur de Granville:

"Well, monsieur, it is just an hour since our man set out; are you not afraid that he may have fooled you? He is on the road to Spain perhaps by this time, and we shall not find him there, for Spain is a whimsical kind of country."

"Either I know nothing of men, or he will come back; he is bound by every interest; he has more to look for at my hands than he has to give."

Bibi-Lupin walked in.

"Monsieur le Comte," said he, "I have good news for you. Jacques Collin, who had escaped, has been recaptured."

"And this," said Jacques Collin, addressing Monsieur de Granville, "is the way you keep your word!—Ask your double-faced agent where he took me."

"Where?" said the public prosecutor.

"Close to the Court, in the vaulted passage," said Bibi-Lupin.

"Take your irons off the man," said Monsieur de Granville sternly. "And remember that you are to leave him free till further orders.—Go!—You have a way of moving and acting as if you alone were law and police in one."

The public prosecutor turned his back on Bibi-Lupin, who became deadly pale, especially at a look from Jacques Collin, in which he read disaster.

"I have not been out of this room. I expected you back, and you cannot doubt that I have kept my word, as you kept yours," said Monsieur de Granville to the convict.

"For a moment I did doubt you, sir, and in my place perhaps you would have thought as I did, but on reflection I saw that I was unjust. I bring you more than you can give me; you had no interest in betraying me."

The magistrate flashed a look at Corentin. This glance, which could not escape Trompe-la-Mort, who was watching Monsieur de Granville, directed his attention to the strange little old man sitting in an armchair in a corner. Warned at once by the swift and anxious instinct than scents the presence of an enemy, Collin examined this figure; he saw at a glance that the eyes were not so old as the costume would suggest, and he detected a disguise. In one second Jacques Collin was revenged on Corentin for the rapid insight with which Corentin had unmasked him at Peyrade's.

"We are not alone!" said Jacques Collin to Monsieur de Granville.

"No," said the magistrate drily.

"And this gentleman is one of my oldest acquaintances, I believe," replied the convict.

He went forward, recognizing Corentin, the real and confessed originator of Lucien's overthrow.

Jacques Collin, whose face was of a brick-red hue, for a scarcely perceptible moment turned white, almost ashy; all his blood rushed to his heart, so furious and maddening was his longing to spring on this dangerous reptile and crush it; but he controlled the brutal impulse, suppressing it with the force that made him so formidable. He put on a polite manner and the tone of obsequious civility which he had practised since assuming the garb of a priest of a superior Order, and he bowed to the little old man.

"Monsieur Corentin," said he, "do I owe the pleasure of

this meeting to chance, or am I so happy as to be the cause of your visit here?"

Monsieur de Granville's astonishment was at its height, and he could not help staring at the two men who had thus come face to face. Jacques Collin's behavior and the tone in which he spoke denoted a crisis, and he was curious to know the meaning of it. On being thus suddenly and miraculously recognized, Corentin drew himself up like a snake when you tread on its tail.

"Yes, it is I, my dear Abbé Carlos Herrera."

"And are you here," said Trompe-la-Mort, "to interfere between monsieur the public prosecutor and me? Am I so happy as to be the object of one of those negotiations in which your talents shine so brightly?—Here, Monsieur le Comte," the convict went on, "not to waste time so precious as yours is, read these—they are samples of my wares."

And he held out to Monsieur de Granville three letters, which he took out of his breast-pocket.

"And while you are studying them, I will, with your permission, have a little talk with this gentleman."

"You do me great honor," said Corentin, who could not help giving a little shiver.

"You achieved a perfect success in our business," said Jacques Collin. "I was beaten," he added lightly, in the tone of a gambler who has lost his money, "but you left some men on the field—your victory cost you dear."

"Yes," said Corentin, taking up the jest, "you lost your queen, and I lost my two castles."

"Oh! Contenson was a mere pawn," said Jacques Collin scornfully; "you may easily replace him. You really are—allow me to praise you to your face—you are, on my word of honor, a magnificent man."

"No, no, I bow to your superiority," replied Corentin, assuming the air of a professional joker, as he said, "If you mean humbug, by all means humbug! I have everything at my command, while you are single-handed, so to speak."

"Oh! Oh!" said Jacques Collin.

"And you were very near winning the day!" said Corentin, noticing the exclamation. "You are quite the most extraordinary man I ever met in my life, and I have seen many very extraordinary men, for those I have to work with me are all remarkable for daring and bold scheming.

"I was, for my sins, very intimate with the late Duc d'Otranto; I have worked for Louis XVIII. when he was on the throne; and, when he was exiled, for the Emperor and for the Directory. You have the tenacity of Louvel, the best political instrument I ever met with; but you are as supple as the prince of diplomates. And what auxiliaries you have! I would give many a head to the guillotine if I could have in my service the cook who lived with poor little Esther.—And where do you find such beautiful creatures as the woman who took the Jewess' place for Monsieur de Nucingen? I don't know where to get them when I want them."

"Monsieur, monsieur, you overpower me," said Jacques Collin. "Such praise from you will turn my head——"

"It is deserved. Why, you took in Peyrade; he believed you to be a police officer—he!—I tell you what, if you had not had that fool of a boy to take care of, you would have thrashed us."

"Oh! monsieur, but you are forgetting Contenson disguised as a mulatto, and Peyrade as an Englishman. Actors have the stage to help them, but to be so perfect by daylight, and at all hours, no one but you and your men——"

"Come, now," said Corentin, "we are fully convinced of our worth and merits. And here we stand each of us quite alone. I have lost my old friend, you your young companion. I, for the moment, am in the stronger position, why should we not do like the men in *l'Auberge des Adrets?* I offer you my hand, and say, 'Let us embrace, and let bygones be bygones.' Here, in the presence of Monsieur le Comte, I propose to give you full and plenary absolution, and you shall be one of my men, the chief next to me, and perhaps my successor."

"You really offer me a situation?" said Jacques Collin.

"A nice situation indeed!—out of the fire into the frying-pan!"

"You will be in a sphere where your talents will be highly appreciated and well paid for, and you will act at your ease. The Government police are not free from perils. I, as you see me, have already been imprisoned twice, but I am none the worse for that. And we travel, we are what we choose to appear. We pull the wires of political dramas, and are treated with politeness by very great people.—Come, my dear Jacques Collin, do you say yes?"

"Have you orders to act in this matter?" said the convict.

"I have a free hand," replied Corentin, delighted at his own happy idea.

"You are trifling with me; you are very shrewd, and you must allow that a man may be suspicious of you.—You have sold more than one man by tying him up in a sack after making him go into it of his own accord. I know all your great victories—the Montauran case, the Simeuse business—the battles of Marengo of espionage."

"Well," said Corentin, "you have some esteem for the public prosecutor?"

"Yes," said Jacques Collin, bowing respectfully, "I admire his noble character, his firmness, his dignity. I would give my life to make him happy. Indeed, to begin with, I will put an end to the dangerous condition in which Madame de Sérizy now is."

Monsieur de Granville turned to him with a look of satisfaction.

"Then ask him," Corentin went on, "if I have not full power to snatch you from the degrading position in which you stand, and to attach you to me."

"It is quite true," said Monsieur de Granville, watching the convict.

"Really and truly! I may have absolution for the past and a promise of succeeding to you if I give sufficient evidence of my intelligence?"

"Between two such men as we are there can be no misunderstanding," said Corentin, with a lordly air that might have taken anybody in.

"And the price of the bargain is, I suppose, the surrender of those three packets of letters?" said Jacques Collin.

"I did not think it would be necessary to say so to you——"

"My dear Monsieur Corentin," said Trompe-la-Mort, with irony worthy of that which made the fame of Talma in the part of Nicomède, "I beg to decline. I am indebted to you for the knowledge of what I am worth, and of the importance you attach to seeing me deprived of my weapons—I will never forget it.

"At all times and for ever I shall be at your service, but instead of saying with Robert Macaire, 'Let us embrace!' I embrace you."

He seized Corentin round the middle so suddenly that the other could not avoid the hug; he clutched him to his heart like a doll, kissed him on both cheeks, carried him like a feather with one hand, while with the other he opened the door, and then set him down outside, quite battered by this rough treatment.

"Good-bye, my dear fellow," said Jacques Collin in a low voice, and in Corentin's ear: "the length of three corpses parts you from me; we have measured swords, they are of the same temper and the same length. Let us treat each other with due respect; but I mean to be your equal, not your subordinate. Armed as you would be, it strikes me you would be too dangerous a general for your lieutenant. We will place a grave between us. Woe to you if you come over on to my territory!

"You call yourself the State, as footmen call themselves by their master's names. For my part, I will call myself Justice. We shall often meet; let us treat each other with dignity and propriety—all the more because we shall always remain—atrocious blackguards," he added in a whisper. "I set you the example by embracing you——"

Corentin stood nonplussed for the first time in his life, and allowed his terrible antagonist to wring his hand.

"Good-bye, my dear fellow . . . the length of three corpses parts you from me"

"If so," said he, "I think it will be to our interest on both sides to remain chums."

"We shall be stronger each on our own side, but at the same time more dangerous," added Jacques Collin in an undertone. "And you will allow me to call on you to-morrow to ask for some pledge of our agreement."

"Well, well," said Corentin amiably, "you are taking the case out of my hands to place it in those of the public prosecutor. You will help him to promotion; but I cannot but own to you that you are acting wisely.—Bibi-Lupin is too well known; he has served his turn; if you get his place, you will have the only situation that suits you. I am delighted to see you in it—on my honor——"

"Till our next meeting, very soon," said Jacques Collin.

On turning round, Trompe-la-Mort saw the public prosecutor sitting at his table, his head resting on his hands.

"Do you mean that you can save the Comtesse de Sérizy from going mad?" asked Monsieur de Granville.

"In five minutes," said Jacques Collin.

"And you can give me all those ladies' letters?"

"Have you read the three?"

"Yes," said the magistrate vehemently, "and I blush for the women who wrote them."

"Well, we are now alone; admit no one, and let us come to terms," said Jacques Collin.

"Excuse me, Justice must first take its course. Monsieur Camusot has instructions to seize your aunt."

"He will never find her," said Jacques Collin.

"Search is to be made at the Temple, in the house of a demoiselle Paccard who superintends her shop."

"Nothing will be found there but rags, costumes, diamonds, uniforms—— However, it will be as well to check Monsieur Camusot's zeal."

Monsieur de Granville rang, and sent an office messenger to desire Monsieur Camusot to come and speak with him.

"Now," said he to Jacques Collin, "an end to all this! I want to know your recipe for curing the Countess."

"Monsieur le Comte," said the convict very gravely, "I was, as you know, sentenced to five years' penal servitude for forgery. But I love my liberty.—This passion, like every other, had defeated its own end, for lovers who insist on adoring each other too fondly end by quarreling. By dint of escaping and being recaptured alternately, I have served seven years on the hulks. So you have nothing to remit but the added terms I earned in quod—I beg pardon, in prison. I have, in fact, served my time, and till some ugly job can be proved against me—which I defy Justice to do, or even Corentin—I ought to be reinstated in my rights as a French citizen.

"What is life if I am banned from Paris and subject to the eye of the police? Where can I go, what can I do? You know my capabilities. You have seen Corentin, that storehouse of treachery and wile, turn ghastly pale before me, and doing justice to my powers.—That man has bereft me of everything; for it was he, and he alone, who overthrew the edifice of Lucien's fortunes, by what means and in whose interest I know not.—Corentin and Camusot did it all——"

"No recriminations," said Monsieur de Granville; "give me the facts."

"Well, then, these are the facts. Last night, as I held in my hand the icy hand of that dead youth, I vowed to myself that I would give up the mad contest I have kept up for twenty years past against society at large.

"You will not believe me capable of religious sentimentality after what I have said of my religious opinions. Still, in these twenty years I have seen a great deal of the seamy side of the world. I have known its back-stairs, and I have discerned, in the march of events, a Power which you call Providence and I call Chance, and which my companions call Luck. Every evil deed, however quickly it may hide its traces, is overtaken by some retribution. In this struggle for existence, when the game is going well—when you have quint and quatorze in your hand and the lead—the candle tumbles over and the cards are burned, or the player has a fit of

apolexy!—That is Lucien's story. That boy, that angel, had not committed the shadow of a crime; he let himself be led, he let things go! He was to marry Mademoiselle de Grandlieu, to be made marquis; he had a fine fortune;—well, a prostitute poisons herself, she hides the price of a certificate of stock, and the whole structure so laboriously built up crumbles in an instant.

"And who is the first man to deal a blow? A man loaded with secret infamy, a monster who, in the world of finance, has committed such crimes that every coin of his vast fortune has been dipped in the tears of a whole family [see *la Maison Nucingen*]—by Nucingen, who has been a legalized Jacques Collin in the world of money. However, you know as well as I do all the bankruptcies and tricks for which that man deserves hanging. My fetters will leave a mark on all my actions, however virtuous. To be a shuttlecock between two racquets—one called the hulks, and the other the police—is a life in which success means never-ending toil, and peace and quiet seem quite impossible.

"At this moment, Monsieur de Granville, Jacques Collin is buried with Lucien, who is being now sprinkled with holy water and carried away to Père-Lachaise. What I want is a place not to live in, but to die in. As things are, you, representing Justice, have never cared to make the released convict's social status a concern of any interest. Though the law may be satisfied, society is not; society is still suspicious, and does all it can to justify its suspicions; it regards a released convict as an impossible creature; it ought to restore him to his full rights, but, in fact, it prohibits his living in certain circles. Society says to the poor wretch, 'Paris, which is the only place you can be hidden in; Paris and its suburbs for so many miles round is the forbidden land, you shall not live there!' and it subjects the convict to the watchfulness of the police. Do you think that life is possible under such conditions? To live, the convict must work, for he does not come out of prison with a fortune.

"You arrange matters so that he is plainly ticketed, recognized, hedged round, and then you fancy that his fellow-citizens will trust him, when society and justice and the world around him do not. You condemn him to starvation or crime. He cannot get work, and is inevitably dragged into his old ways, which lead to the scaffold.

"Thus, while earnestly wishing to give up this struggle with the law, I could find no place for myself under the sun. One course alone is open to me, that is to become the servant of the power that crushes us; and as soon as this idea dawned on me, the Power of which I spoke was shown in the clearest light. Three great families are at my mercy. Do not suppose I am thinking of blackmail—blackmail is the meanest form of murder. In my eyes it is baser villainy than murder. The murderer needs, at any rate, atrocious courage. And I practise what I preach; for the letters which are my safe-conduct, which allow me to address you thus, and for the moment place me on an equality with you—I, Crime, and you, Justice—those letters are in your power. Your messenger may fetch them, and they will be given up to him.

"I ask no price for them; I do not sell them. Alas! Monsieur le Comte, I was not thinking of myself when I preserved them; I thought that Lucien might some day be in danger! If you cannot agree to my request, my courage is out; I hate life more than enough to make me blow out my own brains and rid you of me!—Or, with a passport, I can go to America and live in the wilderness. I have all the characteristics of a savage.

"These are the thoughts that came to me in the night.—Your clerk, no doubt, carried you a message I sent by him. When I saw what precautions you took to save Lucien's memory from any stain, I dedicated my life to you—a poor offering, for I no longer cared for it; it seemed to me impossible without the star that gave it light, the happiness that glorified it, the thought that gave it meaning, the prosperity of the young poet who was its sun—and I determined to give you the three packets of letters——"

Monsieur de Granville bowed his head.

"I went down into the prison-yard, and there I found the persons guilty of the Nanterre crime, as well as my little chain companion within an inch of the chopper as an involuntary accessory after the fact," Jacques Collin went on. "I discovered that Bibi-Lupin is cheating the authorities, that one of his men murdered the Crottats. Was not this providential, as you say?—So I perceived a remote possibility of doing good, of turning my gifts and the dismal experience I have gained to account for the benefit of society, of being useful instead of mischievous, and I ventured to confide in your judgment, your generosity."

The man's air of candor, of artlessness, of childlike simplicity, as he made his confession, without bitterness, or that philosophy of vice which had hitherto made him so terrible to hear, was like an absolute transformation. He was no longer himself.

"I have such implicit trust in you," he went on, with the humility of a penitent, "that I am wholly at your mercy. You see me with three roads open to me—suicide, America, and the Rue de Jérusalem. Bibi-Lupin is rich; he has served his turn; he is a double-faced rascal. And if you set me to work against him, I would catch him red-handed in some trick within a week. If you will put me in that sneak's shoes, you will do society a real service. I will be honest. I have every quality that is needed in the profession. I am better educated than Bibi-Lupin; I went through my schooling up to rhetoric; I shall not blunder as he does; I have very good manners when I choose. My sole ambition is to become an instrument of order and repression instead of being the incarnation of corruption. I will enlist no more recruits to the army of vice.

"In war, monsieur, when a hostile general is captured, he is not shot, you know; his sword is returned to him, and his prison is a large town; well, I am the general of the hulks, and I have surrendered.—I am beaten, not by the law, but by death. The sphere in which I crave to live and act is

the only one that is suited to me, and there I can develop the powers I feel within me.

"Decide."

And Jacques Collin stood in an attitude of diffident submission.

"You place the letters in my hands, then?" said the public prosecutor.

"You have only to send for them; they will be delivered to your messenger."

"But how?"

Jacques Collin read the magistrate's mind, and kept up the game.

"You promised me to commute the capital sentence on Calvi for twenty years' penal servitude. Oh, I am not reminding you of that to drive a bargain," he added eagerly, seeing Monsieur de Granville's expression; "that life should be safe for other reasons, the lad is innocent——"

"How am I to get the letters?" asked the public prosecutor. "It is my right and my business to convince myself that you are the man you say you are. I must have you without conditions."

"Send a man you can trust to the Flower Market on the quay. At the door of a tinman's shop, under the sign of Achilles' shield——"

"That house?"

"Yes," said Jacques Collin, smiling bitterly, "my shield is there.—Your man will see an old woman dressed, as I told you before, like a fish-woman who has saved money—earrings in her ears, and clothes like a rich market-woman's. He must ask for Madame de Saint-Estève. Do not omit the *de*. And he must say, 'I have come from the public prosecutor to fetch you know what.'—You will immediately receive three sealed packets."

"All the letters are there?" said Monsieur de Granville.

"There is no tricking you; you did not get your place for nothing!" said Jacques Collin, with a smile. "I see you still think me capable of testing you and giving you so

much blank paper.—No; you do not know me," said he. "I trust you as a son trusts his father."

"You will be taken back to the Conciergerie," said the magistrate, "and there await a decision as to your fate."

Monsieur de Granville rang, and said to the office-boy who answered:

"Beg Monsieur Garnery to come here, if he is in his room."

Besides the forty-eight police commissioners who watch over Paris like forty-eight petty Providences, to say nothing of the guardians of Public Safety—and who have earned the nickname of *quart d'œil,* in thieves' slang, a quarter of an eye, because there are four of them to each district,—besides these, there are two commissioners attached equally to the police and to the legal authorities, whose duty it is to undertake delicate negotiation, and not frequently to serve as deputies to the examining judges. The office of these two magistrates, for police commissioners are also magistrates, is known as the Delegates' office; for they are, in fact, delegated on each occasion, and formally empowered to carry out inquiries or arrests.

These functions demand men of ripe age, proved intelligence, great rectitude, and perfect discretion; and it is one of the miracles wrought by Heaven in favor of Paris, that some men of that stamp are always forthcoming. Any description of the Palais de Justice would be incomplete without due mention of these *preventive* officials, as they may be called, the most powerful adjuncts of the law; for though it must be owned that the force of circumstances has abrogated the ancient pomp and wealth of justice, it has materially gained in many ways. In Paris especially its machinery is admirably perfect.

Monsieur de Granville had sent his secretary, Monsieur de Chargebœuf, to attend Lucien's funeral; he needed a substitute for this business, a man he could trust, and Monsieur Garnery was one of the commissioners in the Delegates' office.

"Monsieur," said Jacques Collin, "I have already proved to you that I have a sense of honor. You let me go free, and I came back.—By this time the funeral mass for Lucien is ended; they will be carrying him to the grave. Instead of remanding me to the Conciergerie, give me leave to follow the boy's body to Père-Lachaise. I will come back and surrender myself prisoner."

"Go," said Monsieur de Granville, in the kindest tone.

"One word more, monsieur. The money belonging to that girl—Lucien's mistress—was not stolen. During the short time of liberty you allowed me, I questioned her servants. I am sure of them as you are of your two commissioners of the Delegates' office. The money paid for the certificate sold by Mademoiselle Esther Gobseck will certainly be found in her room when the seals are removed. Her maid remarked to me that the deceased was given to mystery-making, and very distrustful; she no doubt hid the banknotes in her bed. Let the bedstead be carefully examined and taken to pieces, the mattresses unsewn—the money will be found."

"You are sure of that?"

"I am quite sure of the relative honesty of my rascals; they never play any tricks on me. I hold the power of life and death; I try and condemn them and carry out my sentence without all your formalities. You can see for yourself the results of my authority. I will recover the money stolen from Monsieur and Madame Crottat; I will hand you over one of Bibi-Lupin's men, his right hand, caught in the act; and I will tell you the secret of the Nanterre murders. This is not a bad beginning. And if you only employ me in the service of the law and the police, by the end of a year you will be satisfied with all I can tell you. I will be thoroughly all that I ought to be, and shall manage to succeed in all the business that is placed in my hands."

"I can promise you nothing but my goodwill. What you ask is not in my power. The privilege of granting pardons is the King's alone, on the recommendation of the Keeper

of the Seals; and the place you wish to hold is in the gift of the Préfet of Police."

"Monsieur Garnery," the office-boy announced.

At a nod from Monsieur de Granville the Delegate commissioner came in, glanced at Jacques Collin as one who knows, and gulped down his astonishment on hearing the word "Go!" spoken to Jacques Collin by Monsieur de Granville.

"Allow me," said Jacques Collin, "to remain here till Monsieur Garnery has returned with the documents in which all my strength lies, that I may take away with me some expression of your satisfaction."

This absolute humility and sincerity touched the public prosecutor.

"Go," said he; "I can depend on you."

Jacques Collin bowed humbly, with the submissiveness of an inferior to his master. Ten minutes later, Monsieur de Granville was in possession of the letters in three sealed packets that had not been opened! But the importance of this point, and Jacques Collin's avowal, had made him forget the convict's promise to cure Madame de Sérizy.

When once he was outside, Jacques Collin had an indescribable sense of satisfaction. He felt he was free, and born to a new phase of life. He walked quickly from the Palais to the Church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, where mass was over. The coffin was being sprinkled with holy water, and he arrived in time thus to bid farewell, in a Christian fashion, to the mortal remains of the youth he had loved so well. Then he got into a carriage and drove after the body to the cemetery.

In Paris, unless on very exceptional occasions, or when some famous man has died a natural death, the crowd that gathers about a funeral diminishes by degrees as the procession approaches Père-Lachaise. People make time to show themselves in church; but every one has his business to attend to, and returns to it as soon as possible. Thus of

ten mourning carriages, only four were occupied. By the time they reached Père-Lachaise there were not more than a dozen followers, among whom was Rastignac.

"That is right; it is well that you are faithful to him," said Jacques Collin to his old acquaintance.

Rastignac started with surprise at seeing Vautrin.

"Be calm," said his old fellow-boarder at Madame Vauquer's. "I am your slave, if only because I find you here. My help is not to be despised; I am, or shall be, more powerful than ever. You slipped your cable, and you did it very cleverly; but you may need me yet, and I will always be at your service."

"But what are you going to do?"

"To supply the hulks with lodgers instead of lodging there," replied Jacques Collin.

Rastignac gave a shrug of disgust.

"But if you were robbed——"

Rastignac hurried on to get away from Jacques Collin.

"You do not know what circumstances you may find yourself in."

They stood by the grave dug by the side of Esther's.

"Two beings who loved each other, and who were happy!" said Jacques Collin. "They are united.—It is some comfort to rot together. I will be buried here."

When Lucien's body was lowered into the grave, Jacques Collin fell in a dead faint. This strong man could not endure the light rattle of the spadefuls of earth thrown by the gravediggers on the coffin as a hint for their payment.

Just then two men of the corps of Public Safety came up; they recognized Jacques Collin, lifted him up, and carried him to a hackney coach.

"What is up now?" asked Jacques Collin when he recovered consciousness and had looked about him.

He saw himself between two constables, one of whom was Ruffard; and he gave him a look which pierced the murderer's soul to the very depths of la Gonore's secret.

"Why, the public prosecutor wants you," replied Ruffard,

"and we have been hunting for you everywhere, and found you in the cemetery, where you had nearly taken a header into that boy's grave."

Jacques Collin was silent for a moment.

"Is it Bibi-Lupin that is after me?" he asked the other man.

"No. Monsieur Garnery sent us to find you."

"And he told you nothing?"

The two men looked at each other, holding council in expressive pantomime.

"Come, what did he say when he gave you your orders?"

"He bid us fetch you at once," said Ruffard, "and said we should find you at the Church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés; or, if the funeral had left the church, at the cemetery."

"The public prosecutor wants me?"

"Perhaps."

"That is it," said Jacques Collin; "he wants my assistance."

And he relapsed into silence, which greatly puzzled the two constables.

At about half-past two Jacques Collin once more went up to Monsieur de Granville's room, and found there a fresh arrival in the person of Monsieur de Granville's predecessor, the Comte Octave de Bauvan, one of the Presidents of the Court of Appeals.

"You forgot Madame de Sérizy's dangerous condition, and that you had promised to save her."

"Ask these rascals in what state they found me, monsieur," said Jacques Collin, signing to the two constables to come in.

"Unconscious, monsieur, lying on the edge of the grave of the young man they were burying."

"Save Madame de Sérizy," said the Comte de Bauvan, "and you shall have what you will."

"I ask for nothing," said Jacques Collin. "I surrendered at discretion, and Monsieur de Granville must have received——"

"All the letters, yes," said the magistrate. "But you promised to save Madame de Sérizy's reason. Can you? Was it not a vain boast?"

"I hope I can," replied Jacques Collin modestly.

"Well, then, come with me," said Comte Octave.

"No, monsieur; I will not be seen in the same carriage by your side—I am still a convict. It is my wish to serve the Law; I will not begin by discrediting it. Go back to the Countess; I will be there soon after you. Tell her Lucien's best friend is coming to see her, the Abbé Carlos Herrera; the anticipation of my visit will make an impression on her and favor the cure. You will forgive me for assuming once more the false part of a Spanish priest; it is to do so much good!"

"I shall find you there at about four o'clock," said Monsieur de Granville, "for I have to wait on the King with the Keeper of the Seals."

Jacques Collin went off to find his aunt, who was waiting for him on the Quai aux Fleurs.

"So you have given yourself up to the authorities?" said she.

"Yes."

"It is a risky game."

"No; I owed that poor Théodore his life, and he is reprieved."

"And you?"

"I—I shall be what I ought to be. I shall always make our set shake in their shoes.—But we must get to work. Go and tell Paccard to be off as fast as he can go, and see that Europe does as I told her."

"That is a trifle; I know how to deal with la Gonore," said the terrible Jacqueline. "I have not been wasting my time here among the gilliflowers."

"Let Ginetta, the Corsican girl, be found by to-morrow," Jacques Collin went on, smiling at his aunt.

"I shall want some clue."

"You can get it through Manon la Blonde," said Jacques.

"Then we meet this evening," replied the aunt, "you are in such a deuce of a hurry. Is there a fat job on?"

"I want to begin with a stroke that will beat everything that Bibi-Lupin has ever done. I have spoken a few words to the brute who killed Lucien, and I live only for revenge! Thanks to our positions, he and I shall be equally strong, equally protected. It will take years to strike the blow, but the wretch shall have it straight in the heart."

"He must have vowed a Roland for your Oliver," said the aunt, "for he has taken charge of Peyrade's daughter, the girl who was sold to Madame Nourrisson, you know."

"Our first point must be to find him a servant."

"That will be difficult; he must be tolerably wide-awake," observed Jacqueline.

"Well, hatred keeps one alive! We must work hard."

Jacques Collin took a cab and drove at once to the Quai Malaquais, to the little room he lodged in, quite separate from Lucien's apartment. The porter, greatly astonished at seeing him, wanted to tell him all that had happened.

"I know everything," said the Abbé. "I have been involved in it, in spite of my saintly reputation; but, thanks to the intervention of the Spanish Ambassador, I have been released."

He hurried up to his room, where, from under the cover of a breviary, he took out a letter that Lucien had written to Madame de Sérizy after that lady had discarded him on seeing him at the opera with Esther.

Lucien, in his despair, had decided on not sending this letter, believing himself cast off for ever; but Jacques Collin had read the little masterpiece; and as all that Lucien wrote was to him sacred, he had treasured the letter in his prayer-book for its poetical expression of a passion that was chiefly vanity. When Monsieur de Granville told him of Madame de Sérizy's condition, the keen-witted man had very wisely concluded that this fine lady's despair and frenzy must be the result of the quarrel she had allowed to subsist between

herself and Lucien. He knew women as magistrates know criminals; he guessed the most secret impulses of their hearts; and he at once understood that the Countess probably ascribed Lucien's death partly to her own severity, and reproached herself bitterly. Obviously a man on whom she had shed her love would never have thrown away his life!—To know that he had loved her still, in spite of her cruelty, might restore her reason.

If Jacques Collin was a grand general of convicts, he was, it must be owned, a not less skilful physician of souls.

This man's arrival at the mansion of the Sérizys was at once a disgrace and a promise. Several persons, the Count, and the doctors were assembled in the little drawing-room adjoining the Countess' bedroom; but to spare him this stain on his soul's honor, the Comte de Bauvan dismissed everybody, and remained alone with his friend. It was bad enough even then for the Vice-President of the Privy Council to see this gloomy and sinister visitor come in.

Jacques Collin had changed his dress. He was in black with trousers, and a plain frock-coat, and his gait, his look, and his manner were all that could be wished. He bowed to the two statesmen, and asked if he might be admitted to see the Countess.

"She awaits you with impatience," said Monsieur de Bauvan.

"With impatience! Then she is saved," said the dreadful magician.

And, in fact, after an interview of half an hour, Jacques Collin opened the door and said:

"Come in, Monsieur le Comte; there is nothing further to fear."

The Countess had the letter clasped to her heart; she was calm, and seemed to have forgiven herself. The Count gave expression to his joy at the sight.

"And these are the men who settle our fate and the fate of nations," thought Jacques Collin, shrugging his shoulders behind the two men. "A female has but to sigh in the wrong

way to turn their brain as if it were a glove! A wink, and they lose their head! A petticoat raised a little higher, dropped a little lower, and they rush round Paris in despair! The whims of a woman react on the whole country. Ah, how much stronger is a man when, like me, he keeps far away from this childish tyranny, from honor ruined by passion, from this frank malignity, and wiles worthy of savages! Woman, with her genius for ruthlessness, her talent for torture, is, and always will be, the marring of man. The public prosecutor, the minister—here they are, all hoodwinked, all moving the spheres for some letters written by a duchess and a chit, or to save the reason of a woman who is more crazy in her right mind than she was in her delirium."

And he smiled haughtily.

"Ay," said he to himself, "and they believe in me! They act on my information, and will leave me in power. I shall still rule the world which has obeyed me these five-and-twenty years."

Jacques Collin had brought into play the overpowering influence he had exerted of yore over poor Esther; for he had, as has often been shown, the mode of speech, the look, the action which quell madmen, and he had depicted Lucien as having died with the Countess' image in his heart.

No woman can resist the idea of having been the one beloved.

"You now have no rival," had been this bitter jester's last words.

He remained a whole hour alone and forgotten in that little room. Monsieur de Granville arrived and found him gloomy, standing up, and lost in a brown study, as a man may well be who makes an 18th Brumaire in his life.

The public prosecutor went to the door of the Countess' room, and remained there a few minutes; then he turned to Jacques Collin and said:

"You have not changed your mind?"

"No, monsieur."

"Well, then, you will take Bibi-Lupin's place, and Calvi's sentence will be commuted."

"And he is not to be sent to Rochefort?"

"Not even to Toulon; you may employ him in your service. But these reprieves and your appointment depend on your conduct for the next six months as subordinate to Bibi-Lupin."

Within a week Bibi-Lupin's new deputy had helped the Crottat family to recover four hundred thousand francs, and had brought Ruffard and Godet to justice.

The price of the certificates sold by Esther Gobseck was found in the courtesan's mattress, and Monsieur de Sérizy handed over to Jacques Collin the three hundred thousand francs left to him by Lucien de Rubempré.

The monument erected by Lucien's orders for Esther and himself is considered one of the finest in Père-Lachaise, and the earth beneath it belongs to Jacques Collin.

After exercising his functions for about fifteen years Jacques Collin retired in 1845.

December 1847.

THE GOVERNMENT CLERKS

To the Contessa Serafina San Severino,
née *Porcia.*

Being obliged to read everything, in the endeavor to repeat nothing, I chanced, the other day, to turn over the pages of a collection of three hundred more or less broadly humorous tales written by Il Bandello, a sixteenth century writer, but little known in France, whose works have only lately been republished in extenso in the compact Florentine edition entitled "Raccolta di Novellieri Italiani." As I glanced for the first time through Il Bandello's original text, your name, Madame, and the name of the Count, suddenly caught my eyes, and made so vivid an impression upon my mind, that it seemed that I had actually seen you. Then I discovered, not without surprise, that every story, were it but five pages long, was prefaced by a familiar letter of dedication to a king or queen, or to one of the most illustrious personages of the time. I saw the names of noble houses of Genoa, Florence, Milan, and Il Bandello's native Piedmont. Sforze, Dorie, Fregosi, and Frascatori; the Dolcini of Mantua, the San Severini of Crema, the Visconti of Milan, and the Guidoboni of Tortona, all appear in his pages; there is a Dante Alighieri (some one of that name was then, it seems, in existence), stories are inscribed to Queen Margaret of France, to the Emperor of Germany, the King of Bohemia, the Archduke Maximilian. There are Sauli, Medici, Soderini, Pallavicini, and a Bentivoglio of Bologna; there are Scaligeri and Colonne; there is a Spanish Cardona; and as for France, Anne de Polignac, Princesse de Marcillac, and Comtesse de la Rochefoucauld, the Marignys, Cardinal d'Armagnac, and the Bishop of Cahors—all the great company of the time in short—are delighted and flattered by a correspondence with Boccaccio's successor. I saw, likewise, how much nobility there was in Il Bandello's own character; for while he adorns his pages with

such illustrious names as these, he is true to his personal friendships. After the Signora Gallerana, Countess of Bergamo, comes the name of a doctor to whom he inscribes his tale of "Romeo e Giulietta;" after the "signora, molto magnifica," Hipolita Visconti ed Attellana follows the name of Livio Liviana, a simple captain of light cavalry; a preacher succeeds the Duke of Orleans, and next in order after one Riario you find "Messer magnifico, Girolamo Ungaro, mercante Lucchese," a virtuous person for whose benefit it is narrated how "un gentiluomo navarese sposa una che era sua sorella e figliuola, non lo sapendo;" the subject being furnished by the Queen of Navarre.

Then I thought that I, like Il Bandello, might put one of my stories under the protection of "una virtuosa, gentilissima illustrissima" Contessa Serafina San Severino, telling her truths that might be taken for flatteries. Why should I not confess that I am proud to bear my testimony here and elsewhere to the fact that fair and noble friendships, now, as in the sixteenth century, are and have been the solace of men of letters wherever the fashion of the day may rank them? that in those friendships they have ever found consolation for slander, insult, and harsh criticism, while the approval of such an audience enables them to rise above the cares and vexations of the literary life? And because you found such pleasure in the mental activity of Paris, that brain of the world; because, with your Venetian subtlety of intellect, you understand it so well; because you loved Gérard's sumptuous salon (now closed to us), in which all the European celebrities of our quarter of the century might be seen, as we see them in Il Bandello's pages; because the great and dangerous Siren's fêtes and magical ceremonies struck you with wonder, and you gave me your impressions of Paris so simply—for all these reasons, surely, you will extend your protection to this picture of a sphere of life which you cannot have known, albeit it is not lacking in character.

I could wish that I had some great poem to offer instead to you whose outward form is the visible expression of all the poetry in

your heart and soul; but since a poor writer of prose can only give what he has, the inadequacy of the offering may perhaps be redeemed, in your eyes, by the respectful homage paid by a deep and sincere admiration, such as you can inspire.

De Balzac.

In Paris, where there is a certain family likeness among students and thinkers who live under similar conditions, you must have seen many faces not unlike M. Rabourdin's at the point at which this history takes up his career. M. Rabourdin at that time was a chief clerk in a most important Government department. He was a man of forty, with hair of so pretty a shade of gray, that women really might love to have it so; it was just the tint that softens the expression of a melancholy face. There was plenty of light in the blue eyes; his complexion, though still fair, was sanguine, and there were little patches of bright red in it; his mouth was grave; his nose and forehead resembled those features in portraits of Louis XV. In person he was tall and spare, as thin, indeed, as if he had but recently recovered from an illness; his gait suggested something of a lounger's indolence, something too of the meditative mood of a busy man.

If this portrait gives the man's character by anticipation, his costume may contribute to set it further in relief; Rabourdin invariably wore a long blue overcoat, a black stock, a double-breasted waistcoat *à la Robespierre,* black trousers without straps, gray silk stockings, and low shoes. At eight every morning, punctual as the clock, he sallied forth duly shaven and ballasted with a cup of coffee, and went, always along the same streets, to the office, looking so prim and tidy that you might have taken him for an Englishman on the way to his embassy. By these tokens you discern the father of a family, a man that has little of his own way in his own house, and plenty of business cares to worry him at the office; and yet withal sufficient of a philosopher to take life as it is; an honest man, loving and serving his country without blinking the difficulties in the way of getting the right thing done;

a prudent man, since he knows something of human nature; a man whose manner to women is exquisitely polite because he expects nothing of them. Lastly, he was a man of very considerable attainments, kindly to his inferiors, apt to keep his equals at a distance, and to stand on his dignity with his chiefs.

At this period of his life you would have noticed that he wore a certain resigned, indifferent air; he seemed to have buried his youthful illusions, and renounced personal ambitions; certain signs indicated that though discouraged he had not yet given up his early projects in disgust, but he persisted in his work rather for the sake of employing his faculties than from any hope of a doubtful triumph. He wore no "decorations," and occasionally blamed himself for the weakness of wearing the Order of the Lily in the early days of the Restoration.

There were certain mysterious elements in Rabourdin's life. His father he had never known. His mother had lived in luxury and splendor; she had a fine carriage, she was always beautifully dressed, her life was a round of gaiety; her son remembered her as a marvelously beautiful and seldom-seen vision. She left him scarcely anything when she died; but she had given him the ordinary imperfect school education which develops great ambitions and little capacity for realizing them. Then he left the Lycée Napoléon only a few days before her death to enter a Government office as a supernumerary at the age of sixteen. Some unknown influence promptly obtained the position for him. At twenty-two, Rabourdin became senior clerk; he was chief clerk at twenty-five. After this, the patronage which had brought the young fellow thus far on in life showed itself in but one more instance. It procured him an entrance to the house of one M. Leprince, a retired auctioneer, reputed to be wealthy. M. Leprince was a widower with an only daughter. Xavier Rabourdin fell over head and ears in love with Mlle. Célestine Leprince, then aged seventeen, and endowed (so it was said) with two hundred thousand francs for her portion. Men in

the highest position might well turn their eyes in the direction of this young lady. A tall, handsome girl with an admirable figure, she had inherited the gifts of an artist mother, who brought her up carefully. Mlle. Leprince spoke several languages, and had acquired some smatterings of learning—a dangerous advantage, which compels a woman to be very careful if she would avoid any appearance of pedantry. And Célestine's mother, blinded by unwise tenderness, had held out hopes that could not be realized; to hear her talk, nobody short of a duke, an ambassador, a marshal of France, or a cabinet minister could give her Célestine her rightful social position. And, indeed, Mlle. Leprince's manners, language, and ways were fitted for the best society. Her dress was too handsome and elegant for a girl of her age; a husband could give Célestine nothing but happiness. And, what was more, the mother (who died a year after her marriage) had spoiled her with such continual indulgence, that a lover had a tolerably difficult part to play.

A man had need have plenty of courage to undertake such a wife! Middle-class suitors took fright and retired. Xavier, an orphan with nothing but his salary as chief clerk in a Government office, was brought forward by M. Leprince, but for a long time Célestine would not hear of him. Not that Mlle. Leprince had any objection to her suitor himself; he was young, handsome, and very much in love, but she had no mind to be called Mme. Rabourdin.

In vain M. Leprince told his daughter that Rabourdin was of the stuff of which cabinet ministers are made. Célestine retorted that a man of the name of Rabourdin would never rise to be anything under the Bourbons, with much more to the same purpose. Driven thus from his intrenchments, her parent was guilty of a grave indiscretion; he hinted to Célestine that her suitor would be Rabourdin *de* somewhere or other before he could reach the age that qualifies for the Chamber. Xavier was sure to be a Master of Requests before very long, and Secretary-General of his department. After those two steps, the young fellow would be

launched into the upper regions of the administration some day; besides, Rabourdin would inherit a fortune and a name by a certain will, as he (Leprince) knew of his own knowledge. The marriage took place.

Rabourdin and his wife believed in the mysterious power discovered to them by the old auctioneer. Hope and the improvidence counseled by love in the early days of married life led the young couple into expense; and in five years M. and Mme. Rabourdin had spent nearly a hundred thousand francs of their principal. Célestine not unreasonably took alarm when promotion did not come, and it was by her wish that the remaining hundred thousand francs of her portion were put into land. The investment only paid a very low interest; but then some day or other old M. Leprince would leave his money to them, and their prudent self-denial would receive the reward of a pleasant competence.

But old M. Leprince saw that his son-in-law had lost his interest, and tried, for his daughter's sake, to repair the secret check. He risked a part of his capital in a very promising speculation; but the poor man became involved in one of the liquidations of the firm of Nucingen, and worried over his losses until he died, leaving nothing behind him but some ten fine pictures which adorned his daughter's drawing-room, and a little old-fashioned furniture which she consigned to the attics.

After eight years of vain expectation, Mme. Rabourdin at last grasped the idea that her husband's fatherly providence must have died suddenly, and that the will had been mislaid or suppressed. Two years before Leprince's death, when the place of the head of the division fell vacant, it was given to one M. de la Billardière, a relative of a deputy on the Right-hand benches, who became a member of the Government in 1823. It was enough to drive a man to resign. But how could Rabourdin give up a salary of eight thousand francs (to say nothing of an occasional bonus) when he was living up to his income, and three-fourths of it came from this source? Besides, would he not have a right to a pension

after a few years of patience? But what a fall was this for a woman whose high pretensions at the outset were almost justifiable, a woman who was supposed to be destined for great things!

Mme. Rabourdin fulfilled the promise of Mlle. Leprince. She possessed the elements of an apparent superiority which pleases in society; her great acquirements enabled her to speak to every one in his own language. And her ability was genuine; she had an independent mind of no common order; her conversation was as charming for its variety as for the originality of her ideas. Such qualities would have shone to advantage and profit in a queen or an ambassadress; they were worth little in the inevitably humdrum routine of domestic life. If people talk well, they are apt to want an audience; they like to talk at length, and sometimes they grow wearisome. To satisfy her intellectual cravings, Mme. Rabourdin received her friends one day in the week, and went a good deal into society, for the sake of the admiration to which she was accustomed.

Those who know life in Paris will understand what a woman of this stamp must suffer when she continually feels the pinch of straitened means at home. In spite of all the senseless rhetorical abuse of money, you must take your stand, if you live in Paris, at the foot of a column of figures; you must bow down before arithmetic, and kiss the cloven foot of the Golden Calf.

Given an income of twelve thousand francs a year, to meet all the expenses of a household consisting of father, mother, and two children, with a housemaid and a cook, and to live on a second-floor flat in the Rue Duphot at a rent of a hundred louis—what a problem was this! Before you begin to estimate the gross expenditure of the house, you must deduct the wife's expenses for dress and hired carriages (for dress is the first thing to consider); then see how much remains to pay for the education of two children (a girl of seven and a boy of nine, who already cost two thousand francs, in spite of a free scholarship), and you will find that

Mme. Rabourdin could barely allow her husband thirty francs a month. Most married men in Paris are, in fact, in the same predicament if they do not wish to be thought monsters of cruelty.

And so it had come to pass that the woman who believed that she was born to shine as one of the queens of society was obliged to exert her intellect and all her powers in a sordid struggle for which she was quite unprepared—a daily wrestling-match with account books. And even so there had been bitter mortifications to suffer. She had dismissed her man-servant after her father's death. Most women grow weary of the daily strain. They grumble for a while, and then yield to their fate; but Célestine's ambition, so far from declining, was only increased by the difficulties. If she could not overcome obstacles, she would clear them from her path. Such complications in the machinery of existence ought to be abolished; and if the Gordian knot could not be untied, genius should cut it. So far from accepting the shabby lot of the lower middle-class housewife, Célestine grew impatient because her great future career was delayed. Fate had not done fairly by her, she thought.

For Célestine honestly believed that she was meant for great things. And perhaps she was right. Perhaps in great circumstances she might have shown herself great. Perhaps she was not in her place. Let us admit that among women, as among men, there are certain types that can mould society to their own wish. But as, in the natural world, not every young sapling shoots up into a tree, and small fry are more numerous than full-grown fish, so, in the artificial world called society, many a human creature who might have done great things, many an Athanase Granson,* is doomed to perish undeveloped like the seeds that fall on stony ground. Of course there are domesticated women, agreeable women, and costly feminine works of art; there are women born to be mothers, wives, or mistresses; there are wholly intellectual and wholly material women; even as among men there are

* See *La Vieille Fille.*

soldiers, artists, craftsmen, mathematicians, merchants, poets, and men who understand nothing beyond money-making, agriculture, or public business. And then the irony of fate comes in and works strange contradictions; many are called, but few chosen, and the law of spiritual election holds equally good in worldly concerns.

Mme. Rabourdin, in her own opinion, was eminently fitted to counsel a statesman, to kindle an artist's soul, to further the interests of an inventor, and to help him in his struggles, or to devote herself to the half-political, half-financial schemes of a Nucingen, and to make a brilliant figure with a large fortune. Perhaps this was how she tried to account to herself for the disgust that she felt for laundress' bills, for the daily schemes of kitchen expenditure and the small economies and cares of a small establishment. In the life that she liked she took a high place. And since she was keenly sensitive to the prickings of the thorns in a lot which might be compared with the position of St. Lawrence upon a gridiron, some outcry surely was only to be expected of her. And so it befell that in paroxysms of thwarted ambition, during sharp throbs of pain, given by wounded vanity, Célestine threw the blame upon Xavier Rabourdin. Was it not incumbent upon her husband to give her a suitable position? If she had been a man, she certainly would have had energy enough to realize a fortune quickly and make a much loved wife happy. He was "too honest," she said; and this reproach in the mouths of some women is as good as a certificate of idiocy.

Célestine would sketch out magnificent plans for him, ignoring all the practical difficulties put in the way by men and circumstances; and, after the manner of women when under the influence of intense feeling, she became, in theory, more machiavellian than a Gondreville, and Maxime de Trailles himself was hardly such a scoundrel. At such times Célestine's imagination conceived all possibilities; she saw herself in the whole extent of her ideas. Rabourdin, meanwhile, with his practical experience, was unmoved from the

outset by these glorious dreams. And Célestine, somewhat dashed, came to the conclusion that her husband was a narrow-minded man, whose views were neither bold enough nor comprehensive enough. Unconsciously she began to form an utterly false idea of her companion in life. She snuffed him out continually, to begin with, by her brilliant arguments; and when he began to explain matters to her, she was apt to cut him short. Her own ideas were wont to occur to her in flashes, and she was afraid to lose the spark of wit.

She had known from the very first days of their married life that Rabourdin admired and loved her; and therefore she treated him with careless security. She set herself above all the laws of married life, and the courtesies of familiarity, leaving all her little shortcomings to be pardoned in the name of Love; and as she never corrected herself, she always had her way. A man in this position is, as it were, confronting a schoolmaster who cannot or will not believe that the boy whom he used to keep in order has grown up. As Mme. de Staël once received a remark made by a "greater man" than herself, by exclaiming before a whole roomful of people, "Do you know that you have just said something very profound?" so Mme. Rabourdin would say of her husband, "There is sometimes sense in what he says!" Gradually her opinion of Xavier began to show itself in little ways. There was a lack of respect in her manner and attitude towards him. And all unconsciously she lowered him in the eyes of others, for everybody all the world over takes a wife's estimate into account in forming an opinion of a man; it is the universal rule in taking a precognition of character; *un préavis,* as the Genevese say, or, to be more accurate, *un préavisse.*

When Rabourdin saw the mistake that he had made through love, it was too late. The bent had been taken; he suffered in silence. In some rare natures the power to feel is as great as the power of thought, a great soul supplements a highly organized brain; and, after the manner of these, Rabourdin was his wife's advocate at the bar of his judgment. Nature (he told himself) had given her a rôle to play; it was entirely

by his fault that she had been cheated of her part. She was like a thoroughbred racer harnessed to a cart full of flints—she was not happy. He took the blame upon himself, in short. His wife had inoculated him with her belief in herself by dint of repeating the same things over and over again. Ideas are infectious in family life. The 9th Thermidor, like many other portentous events, was brought about by feminine influence.

Urged on in this way by Célestine's ambition, Rabourdin had long been meditating how to satisfy it; but he hid his hopes from her to save her the torment of suspense. He had made up his mind, good man that he was, to make his way upwards in the administration by knocking a very considerable hole in it. He wanted, in the first place, to bring about a revolution in the civil service, a radical reform of a kind that puts a man at the head of some section of society; but as he was incapable of scheming a general overturn for his particular benefit, he was revolving projects of reform in his own mind and dreaming of a triumph to be nobly won. The idea was both generous and ambitious. Perhaps few employés have not thought of such plans; but among officials, as among artists, there are many abortive designs for one that sees the light. Which saying brings us back to Buffon's apophthegm, "Genius is patience."

Rabourdin's position enabled him to study the French administrative system and to watch its working. Chance set his speculative faculties moving in the sphere of his practical experience (this, by the way, is the secret of many a man's achievements), and Rabourdin invented a new system of administration. Knowing the men with whom he had to do, he respected the machinery then in existence, still in existence, and likely to remain in existence for a long while to come, every generation being scared by the thought of reconstruction; but while Rabourdin respected the mechanism as a whole, nobody, he thought, could refuse to simplify it.

How to employ the same energy to better purpose—here, to his thinking, lay the problem. Reduced to its simplest

expression, his plan consisted in redistributing the burden of taxation in such a way that it should fall less heavily on the nation, while there should be no falling off in the revenues of the State; and, furthermore, in those days when the budget provoked such frantic discussion, he meant to make the undiminished national income go twice as far as before.

Long practical experience had made it clear to Rabourdin that perfection is gradually attained by a succession of simple modifications. Economy is simplification. If you simplify, you dispense with a superfluous wheel; and, consequently, something must go. His system, therefore, involved changes which found expression in a new administrative nomenclature. Herein, probably, you may find the reason of the unpopularity of the innovator. Necessary suppressions are taken amiss from the outset; they threaten a class which does not readily adapt itself to a change of environment. Rabourdin's real greatness lay in this—he restrained the inventor's enthusiasm, while he sought patiently to gear one measure into another so as to avoid unnecessary friction, and left time and experience to demonstrate the excellence of each successive modification. This idea of the gradual nature of the change must not be lost sight of in a rapid survey of the system, or it will seem impossible to bring about so great a result. It is worth while, therefore, incomplete as Rabourdin's disclosures were, to indicate the starting-point from which he meant to embrace the whole administrative horizon. The account of his scheme, moreover, brings us to the very core of the intrigues of which it was the cause, and may throw a light besides upon some present day evils.

Rabourdin had been deeply impressed by the hardships of the lives of subordinate officials. He asked himself why they were falling into discredit. He searched into the causes of their decline, and found them in the little semi-revolutions, the back eddies, as it were, of the great storm of 1789. Historians of great social movements have never examined into these, though, as a matter of fact, they made our manners and customs what they are.

In former times, under the monarchy, armies of officials did not exist. They were then few in number and under the direct control of a prime minister, who was always in communication with the crown. In this way the official staff might be said to serve the King almost directly. The chiefs of these zealous servitors were simply plain *premiers commis* —first clerks. In all departments not under His Majesty's direct control—such as the taxes, for instance—the staff were to their chiefs pretty much as the clerks in a counting-house are to their employer; they were receiving a training which was to put them in the way of getting on in life. In this way every point in the official circumference was in close connection with the centre, and received its impetus therefrom. Consequently, there was devotion on one side and trust on the other in those days.

Since 1789 the State, or if you like to have it so, La Patrie has taken the place of the sovereign. The clerks no longer take their instructions directly from one of the first magistrates in the realm. In our day, in spite of our fine ideas of La Patrie, they are government employés, while their chiefs are drifted hither and thither by every wind that blows from a quarter known as the ministry, and the ministry cannot tell to-day whether to-morrow will find it in existence. As routine business must always be dispatched, there is always a fluctuating number of supernumeraries who cannot be dispensed with, and yet are liable to dismissal at a moment's notice. All of these naturally are anxious to be "established clerks." And thus Bureaucracy, the giant power wielded by pigmies, came into the world. Possibly Napoleon retarded its influence for a time, for all things and all men were forced to bend to his will; but none the less the heavy curtain of Bureaucracy was drawn between the right thing to be done and the right man to do it. Bureaucracy was definitely organized, however, under a constitutional government with a natural kindness for mediocrity, a predilection for categorical statements and reports, a government as fussy and meddlesome, in short, as a small shopkeeper's wife.

Cabinet ministers' lives became a continual struggle with some four hundred petty minds led by a dozen or so of restless and intriguing spirits. It was a delightful spectacle for the rank and file of the service. They hastened to make themselves indispensable, hampering energy with documents, thereby creating a *vis inertiæ,* styled the Report. Let us explain the Report.

When kings had ministers, and they only began this practice under Louis XV., they were wont to have a report drawn up on all important questions, instead of taking counsel as before with the great men of the realm. Imperceptibly, ministers were compelled by their understrappers to follow the royal example. They were so busy holding their own in the two Chambers or at Court, that they allowed themselves to be guided by the leading-string of the Report. If anything of consequence came up in the administration, the minister had but one answer to the most pressing question—"I have asked for a report." In this way the Report became for men in office, and in public business generally, pretty much what it is for the Chamber of Deputies and the Legislature, a sort of consultation in the course of which the reasons for and against a measure are set forth with more or less impartiality. The minister, like the Chamber, after reading it, is very much where he was before.

Any kind of decision must be made instantaneously. Whatever the preliminary process, the moment comes when you must make up your mind, and the bigger the array of arguments, the harder it is to come by a wise decision. The greatest deeds were done in France before reports were invented and decisions were made out of hand. The supreme rule for statesman, lawyer, or physician is the same—he must adopt a definite formula to suit each individual case. Rabourdin, who thought within himself that "a minister is there to give decisions, to understand public business, and to despatch it," beheld the report carrying all before it, from the colonel to the marshal, from the commissary of police to the king, from the prefect to the cabinet minister, from the Chamber to the police-courts.

Since 1808 everything had been on its trial; everything was weighed and pondered in conversation, books, and newspapers, and every discussion took literary shape. France was making dissertations instead of acting, and came to the brink of ruin in spite of these fine reports. A million of them would be drawn up in a year in those days! Wherefore Bureaucracy got the upper hand. Portfolios, letter-files, wastepaper, documents, and vouchers, without which France would be lost, and circulars which she could not do without, increased and multiplied and waxed imposing. Bureaucracy for its own ends fomented the ill-feeling between the receipts and expenditure, and calumniated the administration for the benefit of the administrator. Bureaucracy devised the Lilliputian threads which chain France to Parisian centralization; as if from 1500 to 1800 France had managed to do nothing without thirty thousand government clerks! And no sooner had the official fastened on the government as mistletoe takes root on a pear-tree, than he ceased to take any interest in his work, and for the following reasons:—

The Princes and the Chambers compelled the ministers to take their share of responsibility in the budget, by insisting that their names and the amounts of salaries paid by and to them should appear in detail therein. They were likewise obliged to keep a staff of clerks. Therefore they decreased the salaries, while they increased the number of clerks, in the belief that a government is so much the stronger for the number of people in its employ. The exact converse of this is an axiom written large for all eyes to see. The amount of energy secured varies inversely with the number of agents. The Ministerialism of the Restoration made a mistake, as the event proved, in July 1830. If a government is to be firmly rooted in the heart of the nation, it must be, not by attaching individuals, but by identifying itself with the interests of the country.

The official class was led to despise the government which curtailed their salaries and lowered their social position; in retaliation they behaved as a courtesan behaves with an elderly

adorer. They gave the crown an adequate return for their salaries. If the government and those in its employ had dared to feel each other's pulses; if the big salaries had not stifled the voices of the little ones, the situation would have been recognized as equally intolerable on either side. An official gave his whole mind to making a living; to draw a salary till he could reach a pension was his one object; and to attain that great result, anything (in his opinion) was permissible. Such a state of things made a serf of a clerk; it was a source of never-ending intrigues in the departments; and to make matters worse, a degenerate aristocracy tried to find pasture on the bourgeois common lands, using all its influence to get the best places for spendthrift sons; and with these the poor civil servant was obliged to compete. A really able man is hardly likely to try to make his way in these tortuous mazes; he will not cringe and wriggle and crawl through muddy by-paths where the appearance of a man of brains creates a general scare. An ambitious man of genius may grow old in the effort to reach the triple tiara, but he will not follow in the footsteps of a Sixtus V., to be a chief clerk for his pains. If a man came into the department and stopped there, he was either indolent or incompetent, or excessively simple.

And so, by degrees, the administration was reduced to a dead level of mediocrity, and an official hierarchy of petty minds became a standing obstruction in the way of national prosperity. A project for a canal, which would have developed the industries of a province, might lie in a pigeonhole for seven years. Bureaucracy shirked every question, protracted delays, and perpetuated abuses the better to protract and perpetuate its own existence. Every one, even to the minister in office, was kept in leading-strings; and if any man of ability was rash enough to try to do without bureaucracy, or to turn the light upon its blunders, he was incontinently snuffed out. The list of pensions had just been published. Rabourdin discovered that a retired office messenger was drawing a larger sum from the Govern-

ment than many a disabled colonel. The history of bureaucracy might be read at large in the pension list.

Rabourdin attributed the lurking demoralization in part to another evil, which has its roots in our modern manners; there is no real subordination in the service. A complete equality prevails from the head of the division to the lowest copying clerk; and one man is as good as another in the arena, though when he leaves it, he takes a high place outside. A poet, an artist, and an ordinary clerk are all alike employés; they make no distinctions among themselves. Education dispensed indiscriminately brings about the natural results. Does not the son of a minister's hall-porter decide the fate of a great man or some landed proprietor for whom his father used to open the door? The latest comer therefore can compete with the oldest. A wealthy supernumerary driving to Longchamp in his tilbury with a pretty woman by his side, points out the head of his office to his companion with his whip. "There goes my chief!" he says, and his wheels splash the poor father of a poor family who must go on foot through the streets. The Liberals call this sort of thing Progress; Rabourdin looked upon it as Anarchy in the core of the administration. Did he not see the results of it?—the restless intriguing as of women and eunuchs in the harem of an effete sultan, the pettiness of bigots, the underhand spite, the schoolboy tyranny, the feats on a level with the tricks of performing fleas, the slave's petty revenges taken on the minister himself, the toil and diplomacy from which an ambassador would shrink dismayed—and all undertaken to gain a bonus or an increase of salary? And meanwhile the men who really did the work, the few whose devotion to their country stood out in strong contrast against the background of incompetence,—these were the victims of parasites, these were forced out of the field by sordid trickery. As all high places were no longer in the gift of the crown, but went by interest in parliament, officials were certain, sooner or later, to become wheels in the machinery of government; they would be kept more or less abundantly greased, and that was all they

cared about. This fatal conviction had already been brought home to many a good worker; it had suppressed many a memorial conscientiously undertaken from a sense of deep-seated evils; it was disheartening many a brave man, and corroding the most vigorous honesty; the better sort were growing weary of injustice; drudgery left them listless, and they ceased to care.

A single one of Rothschild's clerks manages the whole of the English correspondence of the firm; a single man in a government office could undertake the whole of the correspondence with the prefectures. But whereas the first man is learning the rudiments of the art of getting on in the world, the latter is wasting his time, health, and life. Here, again, the ground rang hollow.

Of course, a nation is not threatened with extinction because a capable clerk retires and a third-rate man takes his place. Unluckily for nations, it would seem that no man is indispensable to their existence; but when all men have come down to a low level, the nation disappears. If any one wants an instructive example, he can go to Venice, Madrid, Amsterdam, Stockholm, and Rome: the places where men of immense power used to shine conspicuous are crumbling ruins, destroyed by pettiness which corroded its way till it reached high places that it could not fill. When the day of struggle came, everything collapsed at the first threat of attack.

But what a difficult problem was this! To rehabilitate the official at a time when the Liberal press was clamoring through every workshop that the nation was being robbed year by year to pay official salaries, and every heading in the budget was represented as a horse-leech. "What was the good of paying a milliard of taxes every year?" cried the Liberals.

To M. Rabourdin's thinking, the government employé was to the national expenditure what the gambler is to the gambling saloon—whatever he takes away in his pocket he brings back again. A good salary, in his opinion, was a

good investment. If you only pay a man a thousand francs a year, and ask for his whole time, do you not as good as organize theft and misery? A convict costs you very nearly as much, and does rather less work. But if the Government pays a man a salary of twelve thousand francs, and expects him to devote himself in return to the service, the contract would pay both sides, and the prospect ought to attract really capable men.

These reflections thereupon led Rabourdin to reconstitute the staff; to have fewer clerks, salaries trebled or doubled, and pensions suppressed. The Government should follow the example set by Napoleon, Louis XIV., Richelieu, and Ximenes, and employ young men; but the young men should grow old in the service. The higher posts and distinctions should be the rewards of their career. These were the capital points of a reform by which the government and the official staff would alike be benefited.

It is not easy to enter into details, to take heading by heading, and go through a scheme of reform which embraced the whole of the budget and descended into all the smallest ramifications of the administration, so that the whole might be brought into harmony. Perhaps, too, an indication of the principal reforms will be enough for those who know the administrative system—and for those who do not. But though the historian ventures upon dangerous ground when he gives an account of a scheme that has very much the look of armchair policy, he is none the less bound to give a rough idea of Rabourdin's projects for the sake of the light which a man's work throws on his character. If all account of Rabourdin's labors were omitted, if this historian contented himself with the simple statement that the chief clerk in a government office possessed talent or audacity, you would scarcely feel prepared to take his word for it.

Rabourdin divided up the administration into three principal departments. He thought that if in former times there were heads capable of controlling the whole policy of

the government at home and abroad, the France of to-day surely would not lack a Mazarin, a Suger, a Sully, a Choiseul, a Colbert, to direct far larger departments than those of the actual system. From a constitutional point of view, moreover, three ministers would work better together than seven, and the chances of going wrong in the choice are reduced; while, as a last consideration, the crown would be spared the jolts of those perpetual changes of ministry which make it impossible to adhere to any consistent course of foreign policy, or to carry through reforms at home. In Austria, where different nationalities present a problem of different interests to be reconciled and furthered by the crown, two statesmen carry the weight of public business without being overburdened. Was France poorer in political capacity than Germany? The sufficiently silly farce, entitled "Constitutional Institutions," has since been carried to an unreasonable extent; and the end of it, as everybody knows, has been a multiplication of ministerial portfolios to satisfy the widespread ambition of the bourgeoisie.

In the first place, it seemed natural to Rabourdin to reunite the Admiralty and the War Office. The navy, like the artillery, cavalry, infantry, and ordnance, was a spending department of the War Office. It was surely an anomaly to keep admirals and marshals on a separate footing, when all worked together for a common end—to wit, the defence of the country, the protection of national property, and wars of aggression. The Minister of the Interior was to preside over the Board of Trade, the Police, and the Exchequer, the better to deserve his name; while the Minister of Foreign Affairs controlled the administration of justice, the royal household, and everything in the interior which concerned arts, letters, or the graces. All patronage was to flow directly from the crown. The last-named minister, by virtue of his office, was also President of the Council of State. The work of each of these departments would require a staff of two hundred clerks at most at headquarters; and Rabourdin proposed to house them all in one building, as in former days

under the monarchy. Reckoning the salaries at an average of twelve thousand francs, the expense of this item in the budget would a little exceed seven millions, as against twenty millions on the actual system.

By reducing the number of the departments to three, Rabourdin suppressed whole divisions, and saved the enormous expense of their maintenance in Paris. He proved that an arrondissement ought to be worked by ten men, and a prefecture by a dozen at most; on which computation the total number of government officials employed all over France (the army and courts of law excepted) would only amount to about five thousand—a number then exceeded by the staff in Paris alone. On this plan, however, mortgages became the province of the clerks of the various courts; the staff of counsel for the crown (*ministère public*) in each court would undertake the registration of titles and the superintendence of the crown lands.

In this way Rabourdin concentrated similar functions. Mortgages, death-dues, and registration of titles remained within judicial spheres, while three supernumeraries in each court, and three in the Court-Royal, sufficed for the extra work.

By the consistent application of the same principle, Rabourdin proceeded to financial reform. He had amalgamated all Imperial taxes in one single tax, levied, not upon property, but upon commodities consumed. An assessed tax upon consumption, in his opinion, was the only way of raising the national revenue in times of peace, the land-tax being reserved for times of war. Then, and then alone, the State might demand sacrifices of the owners of the soil for the defence of the soil; at other times it was a gross political blunder to vex the land with burdens beyond a certain limit; something should be left to fall back upon in great crises. On the same principle, loans were to be negotiated in time of peace, because they can then be issued at par, and not (as in hard times) at fifty per cent. discount. If war broke out, the land-tax remained as a resource.

"The invasion of 1814 and 1815 did what neither Law nor Napoleon could do," Rabourdin used to say to his friends; "it proved the necessity of a National Debt, and created it."

Rabourdin held that the true principles of this wonderful mechanism were, unfortunately, not sufficiently understood at the time when he began his work, which is to say, in 1820. He proposed to lay a direct tax upon commodities consumed by the nation, and in this way to make a clean sweep of the whole apparatus for the collection of indirect taxes. He would do away with the vexatious barricades at town gates, securing at the same time a far larger return by simplifying the extremely costly system of collection in actual use. The receipts from the one Imperial tax should be regulated by a tariff comprising various articles of consumption, and the amount fixed in each case by assessment. To diminish the burdensomeness of a tax does not necessarily mean in matters financial that you diminish the tax itself; it is only more conveniently assessed. If you lighten the burden, business is transacted more freely, and while the individual pays less, the State gets more.

Tremendous as this reform may seem, it was carried out in a very simple fashion. Rabourdin took for a basis the assessments made by the Inland Revenue Department and the licenses, as the fairest way of computing consumption. House rent in France is a remarkably accurate guide in the matter of the incomes of private individuals; and servants, horses, and carriages lend themselves to estimates for the Exchequer. Houses and their contents vary very little in yearly value, and do not easily disappear. Rabourdin pointed out a method of obtaining more veracious returns than those given by the system in use; then he took the total revenue derived by the Exchequer from (so-called) indirect taxation, divided it up, and assessed his single tax at so much per cent on each individual taxpayer.

An Imperial tax is a preliminary charge paid on things or persons, and paid under more or less specious disguises. Such disguises were well enough for purposes of extortion;

but surely they are absurd in these days when the classes which bear the burden of taxation know perfectly well why the money is wanted and how it is raised. As a matter of fact, the budget is not a strong-box, rather it is a watering-pot; as it is filled and the water distributed, the country prospers. Suppose, for instance, that there were six millions of taxpayers in easy circumstances—and Rabourdin was prepared to show that so many existed, if the rich taxpayers were included in the number—would it not be better, instead of putting a vexatious tax on wine by the gallon, to ask the consumer to pay a fixed sum per annum to the Government? Such "wine-dues" would not be more odious than the door and window tax, while they would bring in a hundred millions to the Exchequer. If other taxes on consumption were likewise assessed in proportion to the house rent, each individual would actually pay less; the Government would save in the costs of collection; and the consumer would benefit by an immense reduction in the prices of commodities which no longer would be subjected to endless vexatious regulations.

Rabourdin reserved a tax on vineyards, by way of a safeguard against over-production. And, the better to reach the poor consumer, the charge for retailers' licenses was made in proportion to the population of the district. In these three ways the Exchequer would raise an enormous sum without heavy expense, and do away with a tax which was not only vexatious and burdensome, but also very expensive to collect. The burden would fall on the rich instead of tormenting the poor.

Take another instance. Suppose that the duty on salt took the form of one or two francs levied on each taxpayer; the modern *gabelle* would be abolished, the poor population and agriculture generally would feel the relief, the revenue would not be diminished, and no taxpayer would complain. Every taxpayer indeed, whether farmer or manufacturer, would be quick to recognize the improvement if the conditions of living grew easier in country places, and trade in-

creased. And, in fact, the State would see an increase in the number of taxpayers in easy circumstances. The Exchequer would save enormously by sweeping away the extremely costly apparatus for the collection of indirect taxation (a government within a government); and both the Treasury and private individuals would benefit by the economy. Tobacco and gunpowder were to be put under a *régie,* beneath State superintendence. The *régie* system, developed not by Rabourdin, but by others, after the renewal of the legislation on tobacco, was so convincing that that law would have had no chance of passing the Chamber if the Government of the day had not driven them to it. But, then, it was a question of finance rather than of government.

The State should own no property; there should be no Crown domains, no woods and forests, no State mines, no State enterprise. The State as a landowner was an administrative anomaly, in Rabourdin's opinion. The State farms at a disadvantage, and receives no taxes; there is a double loss. The same anomaly reappeared in the commercial world in the shape of State manufactures. No government could work as economically as private enterprise; the processes were slower; and, besides, the State took a certain proportion of raw materials off the market, and left so much the less for other manufacturers who pay taxes. Is it the duty of a government to manufacture or to encourage manufactures? to accumulate wealth, or to see instead that as many different kinds of wealth as possible are created?

On Rabourdin's system, officials were no longer to pay caution-money in cash; they should give security instead. And for this reason: the State either keeps the money in specie (withdrawing it needlessly from circulation), or puts it out to interest at a rate either higher or lower than the rate of interest paid to the official; making an ignoble profit out of its servants in the former case, or paying more than the market price for a loan in the latter, which is folly. Lastly, if at any time the State disposes of the mass of caution-money, it prepares the way, in certain contingencies, for a terrible bankruptcy.

The land-tax was not to be done away with altogether. Rabourdin allowed a very small amount to remain for the sake of keeping the machinery in working order in case of a war. But clearly produce would be free, and manufacturers, finding cheap raw materials, could compete with the foreigner without the insidious aid of protection.

The administration of the departments would be undertaken gratuitously by the well-to-do, a possible peerage being held out as an inducement. Magistrates, and their subaltern, and the learned professions, should receive honors as a recompense. The consideration in which government officials were held would be immensely increased by the importance of their posts and considerable salaries. Each would be thinking of his career and France would no longer suffer from the pension cancer.

As the outcome of all this, Rabourdin estimated that the expenditure would be reduced to seven hundred millions, while the receipts would amount, as before, to twelve hundred millions of francs. An annual surplus of five millions could be made to tell more effectually on the Debt than the paltry Sinking Fund, of which the fallacy had been clearly shown. By establishing a Sinking Fund, the State became a fundholder, as well as a landowner and manufacturer. Lastly, to carry out his project without undue friction, and to avoid a St. Bartholomew of employés, Rabourdin asked for twenty years.

These were the matured ideas of the man whose place had been given to the incompetent M. de la Billardière. A scheme so vast in appearance, yet so simple in the working, a project which swept away more than one great official staff, and suppressed many an equally useless little place, required continual calculation, accurate statistics, and the clearest proofs to substantiate it. For a long while Rabourdin had studied the budget in its double aspect, that of ways and means on the one side, and expenditure on the other. His wife did not know how many nights he gave to these thoughts.

And yet to have conceived the project and superimposed it on the dead body of the administration was as nothing; Rabourdin had still to find a minister capable of appreciating his reforms. His success clearly depended upon a quiet political outlook, and the times were still unsettled. He only considered that the Government was finally secure when three hundred deputies had the courage to form themselves into a solid systematic ministerialist majority. An administration established on that basis had been inaugurated since Rabourdin completed his scheme. The splendor of the time of peace due to the Bourbons eclipsed the military splendors of the brilliant days when France was one vast camp and victories abroad were followed by expenditure and display at home. After the Spanish campaign, the Government seemed as if it were surely entering upon a peaceful era in which good might be done; and, indeed, but three months before, a new reign had begun unhampered by any obstacles, and the Liberals of the Left hailed Charles X. with as much enthusiasm as the party of the Right. It was enough to deceive the most clearsighted. Consequently, the moment seemed propitious to Rabourdin; for if an administration took up so great a scheme of reform, and undertook to carry it through, it must of necessity ensure its own continuance in office.

Never before had Rabourdin seemed more thoughtful and preoccupied as he walked to his office of a morning, and came back again at half-past four in the afternoon. And Mme. Rabourdin, on her side, despairing over her spoilt life, and weary of working in private for some few luxuries of dress, had never seemed so sourly discontent. Still she was attached to her husband; and the shameful intrigues by which the wives of other officials supplemented an inadequate salary, were, in her opinion, unworthy of a woman so much above the ordinary level. For this reason she refused to have anything to do with Mme. Colleville, who was intimate with François Keller, and gave entertainments which eclipsed the parties in the Rue Duphot. Célestine took the

impassive manner of the political thinker, the mental preoccupation of a hard worker for the listless apathy of an official drudge whose spirit has been broken by routine; she thought her husband was submitting to the yoke of the most hateful poverty of all—the poverty of straitened means that just enables a man to live. She sighed to think that she should have married a man of so little energy. And so, about this time, she determined that she would make her husband's fortune for him; at all costs, she would launch him into a higher sphere, and she would hide all the springs of action from him. She set about this task with the originality of conception which distinguished her from other women; she prided herself on rising above their level, on totally disregarding their little prejudices; the barriers that society raises about her sex should not impede her. She would fight fools with their own weapon, so she vowed in her frenzy; she would stake herself upon the issue if there was no other way. In short, she saw things from a height.

The moment was favorable. M. de la Billardière was hopelessly ill, and must die in a few days. If Rabourdin succeeded to the place, his talents (Célestine admitted his administrative ability) would be so well appreciated that the post of Master of Requests (promised before) would be given to him. Then he would be Royal Commissary, and bring forward the measures of the government in the Chamber. How she would help him then! She would be his secretary; if necessary, she would work all night. All this that she might drive a charming calèche in the Bois de Boulogne, and stand on a footing of equality with Mme. Delphine de Nucingen, and raise her salon to a level with Mme. Colleville's, and be invited to high Ministerial solemnities, and gain an appreciative audience. People should call her "Mme. Rabourdin *de* Something-or-other" (she did not know yet where her estate should be), just as they said Mme. d'Espard, Mme. d'Aiglemont, or Mme. de Carigliano. In short, of all things she would put the odious-sounding name of Rabourdin out of sight.

These secret aspirations produced certain corresponding changes in the house. Mme. Rabourdin began by walking resolutely into debt. She engaged a man-servant and put him into an inconspicuous livery, brown with red pipings. She renewed some of the furniture; papered her rooms afresh, decorated them with a constant succession of flowers, and strewed them with knicknacks then in fashion; while she herself, who used to feel occasional conscientious qualms as to her expenses, no longer hesitated to dress in a manner worthy of her ambitions. The various tradesmen who supplied her with the munitions of war discounted her expectations. She gave a dinner-party regularly every Friday, the guests being expected to call to take a cup of tea on the following Wednesday. And her dinner guests were carefully chosen from among influential deputies and personages who might directly or indirectly promote her interests. People enjoyed those evenings very much; or they professed to do so at any rate, and that is enough to attract guests in Paris. As for Rabourdin, he was so intently occupied with the conclusion of his great labors that he never noticed the outbreak of luxury in his house.

And so it came to pass that the husband and wife, all unknown to each other, were laying siege to the same place and working on parallel lines.

Now there flourished in those days a certain secretary-general, by name Clément Chardin des Lupeaulx, a personage of a kind that is sometimes brought much into evidence for a few years at a time by the tide of political events. Subsequently, if a storm arises, he and his like are swept away again; you may find them stranded on the shore heaven knows how far away. But even so the hulk has a certain air of importance. The traveler wonders whether the wrecked vessel contained valuable merchandise, whether it played a part on some great occasion, took a share in a great sea-fight, or carried the velvet canopy of a throne, or the dead body of a king. At this precise juncture Clément des Lu-

peaulx (the Lupeaulx had absorbed the Chardin) had reached his apogee. In every life, however illustrious or obscure, in the careers of dumb animals as of secretaries-general, is there not a zenith and a nadir?—a period when glossiness and sleekness reach a climax, and prosperity reaches its utmost radiance of glory? In the nomenclature of the fabulist, des Lupeaulx belonged to the Bertrand genus, and his whole occupation consisted in discovering Ratons. As he happens to be one of the principal characters in this drama, he deserves to be described therein, and so much the more fully because the Revolution of July abolished his place; and a secretary-general was an eminently useful institution for a constitutional minister.

It is the wont of the moralist to pour forth his indignation upon transcendent abominations. Crimes for him are deeds that bring a man into the police-courts, social subtleties escape his analysis; the ingenuity which gains its ends with the Code for a weapon is either too high or too low, he has neither magnifying glass nor telescope; he must have good, strong-colored horrors, abundantly visible to the naked eye. And as he is always occupied, as one may say, with the carnivora, he had no attention to spare for reptiles; so, luckily for the satirists, the fine shades of a Chardin des Lupeaulx are left to them.

Selfish and vain; supple and proud; sensual and gluttonous; rapacious (for he had debts); discreet as a tomb which keeps its own secrets and allows nothing to issue forth to give the lie to the inscription meant to edify the passing traveler; undaunted and fearless in asking favors; amiable and witty in every sense of the latter word; tactful and ironical at need;—the secretary-general was one among the crowd of mediocrities which form the kernel of the political world. As a politician, he was ready to leap gracefully over any stream, however broad; he was the kind of man that can do you more harm with a kiss than by a thrust with the elbow; he was a brazen-fronted sceptic that would go to mass at Saint Thomas d'Aquin's if there was a fashionable congrega-

tion there. Des Lupeaulx's knowledge consisted in knowing what other people knew; he had chosen the profession of eavesdropper, and never did any of the confraternity pay a more strict attention to business. In his care not to arouse suspicion he was nauseatingly fulsome; subtle as a perfume, caressing as a woman in his manners.

Chardin des Lupeaulx had just completed his fortieth year. His youth had long been a source of affliction to him, for he felt instinctively that only as a deputy could he lay a sure foundation for his fortune. Does any one ask how he had made his way? In a very simple manner. Des Lupeaulx was a political Bonneau. He undertook commissions of the delicate kind which can neither be given to a man that respects himself, nor yet to a man that has lost his self-respect. Errands of that sort are usually undertaken by serious persons of somewhat doubtful authority, whom it is easy to disavow should occasion require it. He was continually compromised, that was his calling; and whether he failed or succeeded, he got on equally fast.

The Restoration was a time of compromise; compromise between man and man, and between accomplished facts and coming events. In all public business, in short, there was a perpetual process of give and take. Des Lupeaulx grasped the idea that authority stood in need of a charwoman.

Let an old woman once get a footing in a house; let her learn how to make the beds and turn them down to satisfaction; let her know where the spoons are kept, where to sweep refuse, where to put the soiled linen, and where to find it; let her acquire the arts of pacifying duns and distinguishing the right kind of person to admit; let her once gain her footing, I repeat, and such a woman may have her faults, yet were she toothless, crooked, uncleanly in her person and habits—nay, were she addicted to the lottery and in the habit of appropriating thirty sous daily for her stakes therein,—her employers are used to her ways, and do not care to part with her. They will hold counsel on the most delicate family affairs in her presence; she is on hand to remind them of re-

sources and to scent out secrets; she brings the rouge-pot and the shawl at the psychological moment; she allows them to scold her, to bundle her downstairs; but, lo! next morning, at their awakening, she enters gaily with an excellent cup of broth. However great a statesman may be, he too needs a charwoman, a factotum with whom he can show himself weak and irresolute; somebody in whose presence he can carp at his destiny, put questions to himself, and answer them, and screw his courage up to the sticking-point. Does not the savage get sparks by rubbing a bit of hard wood against a softer piece? Many a bright genius is kindled on the same principle. Napoleon found such a partner of his joys and cares in Berthier, Richelieu in Père Joseph; des Lupeaulx took up with anybody and everybody. Did a minister fall from power? Des Lupeaulx kept on good terms with him, acting as intermediary between the outgoing and incoming member of the government, soothing the former with a parting piece of flattery, and perfuming a first compliment for the latter. Des Lupeaulx, moreover, understood to admiration those little trifles of which a statesman has no leisure to think. He could recognize a necessity; he was apt in obedience. He enhanced the value of his knavery by being the first to laugh at it, the better to gain its full price; and he was always particularly careful to perform services of a kind which were not likely to be forgotten. When, for instance, people were obliged to cross the gulf fixed between the Empire and the Restoration; when everybody was looking about for a plank; while all the curs in the Imperial service were rushing over to the other side with voluble professions of devotion, des Lupeaulx had raised large sums of the money-lenders, and was crossing the frontier. He staked all to win all. He bought up the most pressing minor debts contracted in exile by His Majesty Louis XVIII.; and being the first in the field, he contrived to discharge nearly three millions at twenty per cent, for he had the good luck to operate in the thick of the events of 1814 and 1815. The profits were swallowed down by Messieurs Gobseck, Werbrust,

and Gigonnet, the croupiers of the enterprise; but des Lupeaulx had promised as much to them. He was not playing a stake, he was venturing the whole bank, knowing well that Louis XVIII. was not the man to forget such a white-washing.

Des Lupeaulx received the appointment of Master of Requests; he was made a chevalier of St. Louis and an officer of the Legion of Honor. Having once gained a footing, the adroit climber cast about for a way of maintaining himself on the ladder. He had gained an entrance into the stronghold, but generals are not wont to keep any useless mouths for long. And then it was that to his professions of useful help and go-between he added a third—he gave gratuitous advice on the internal diseases of power.

He discovered that the so-called great men of the Restoration were profoundly unequal to the occasion. Events were ruling them. He overawed mediocre politicians by going to them in the height of a crisis and selling them those watchwords which men of talent hear as they listen to the future. You are by no means to suppose that such watchwords originated with des Lupeaulx himself; if they had, he would have been a genius, whereas he was simply a clever man. Bertrand Clément des Lupeaulx went everywhere, collecting opinions, fathoming men's inner consciousness, and catching the sounds they gave forth. Like a genuine and indefatigable political bee, he gathered knowledge from all sources. He was a *Bayle's Dictionary* in flesh and blood, but he improved upon his famous prototype; he gathered all opinions, but he did not leave others to draw their own conclusions, and he had the instinct of the blue-fly; he dropped down straightway upon the most succulent morsels of meat in the kitchen.

For which reasons des Lupeaulx was supposed to be indispensable to statesmen. Indeed, the idea took so deep a root in people's minds, that ambitious and successful men judged it expedient to compromise des Lupeaulx, lest he should rise too high, and indemnified him for his lack of importance in public by using their interest for him in private.

Nevertheless, as soon as this fisher of ideas felt that he was generally supported, he had insisted upon earnest-money. He drew his pay as a staff officer of the National Guard, in which he held a sinecure at the expense of the city of Paris; he was a government commissioner for the superintendence of a joint-stock company, and an inspector in the Royal Household. His name appeared twice besides in the civil list as a Secretary-General and Master of Requests. At this moment it was his ambition to be a commander of the Legion of Honor, a gentleman of the bedchamber, a count, and a deputy; but for this last position he had not the necessary qualifications. A deputy in those days was bound to pay a thousand francs in taxes, and des Lupeaulx's miserable place in the country was scarcely worth five hundred francs a year. Where was he to find the money to build a country-house; to surround it with respectable estates, and throw dust in the eyes of his constituents?

At the opening of this Scene he had scarce anything to call his own save a round thirty thousand francs worth of debts, to which nobody disputed his title. Des Lupeaulx dined out every day. For nine years he had been housed at the expense of the State, and the ministers' carriages were at his disposal. Marriage might set him afloat again, if he could bail out the waters that threatened to submerge him; but a good match depended upon advancement, and advancement depended upon a seat in the Chamber of Deputies. Casting about for some way of breaking through the vicious circle, he saw but one expedient—to wit, some great service to be rendered to the government, or some profitable bit of jobbery. But conspiracies (alas!) were played out. The Bourbons, to all appearance, had triumphed over faction. And as for jobbery!—the Left benches, unluckily, were doing all that in them lay to make any government impossible in France; for several years past their absurd discussions had thrown such a searching light upon the doings of the government that good bits of business were out of the question. The last had been done in Spain, and what a fuss they had made about

it! To crown all, des Lupeaulx had multiplied difficulties for himself. Believing in the ministers' friendship for him he imprudently expressed his desire to be seated on the ministerial benches. The Ministry was not slow to perceive the origin of this desire. Des Lupeaulx meant to strengthen a precarious position, and to be no longer dependent upon them. It was the revolt of the hound against the hunter. Wherefore, the Ministry gave him now a cut or two with the whip, and now a caress. They raised up rivals unto him. But des Lupeaulx behaved towards these as a clever courtesan treats newcomers in her profession: he spread snares, they fell into them, and he made them feel the consequences pretty promptly. The more he felt that his position was unsafe, the more he coveted a permanent berth; but clearly he must not show his hand. In one moment he might lose everything. A single stroke of the pen would clip away his colonel's epaulettes, his controller's place, his sinecure with the joint-stock company, and his two posts besides, with their advantages—six salaries in all, cunningly preserved in the teeth of the law against cumulative holdings!

Not unfrequently des Lupeaulx would hold out a threat over his minister, as a mistress frightens her lover; he was "about to marry a rich widow," and then the minister would coax the dear des Lupeaulx. It was during one of these renewals of love that the secretary-general received a promise of the first vacancy at the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres. It was enough to keep a horse upon, he said. Clément Chardin des Lupeaulx flourished like a tree set in congenial soil. He found satisfaction for his vices and virtues, his fancies and defects.

Now for the burdens of his day. First of all, out of half a dozen invitations to select the best dinner. This being decided, he went the first thing in the morning to amuse the minister and his wife, and fondle and play with the children. Then he usually worked for an hour or two; which is to say, he spread himself out in a comfortable armchair to read the papers, dictate the gist of a letter, receive all comers in the

minister's absence, lay down the rough outline of the day's routine, receive and give promises that meant nothing, and run over petitions with his eyeglass. To these he sometimes affixed his signature, which, being interpreted, meant, "Do as you like about this; I don't care." Everybody knew that if des Lupeaulx were really interested in a matter, he would interfere in person. Some confidential chat on delicate topics was vouchsafed to the upper clerks, and he listened to their gossip in return. Every now and again he went to the Tuileries to take orders; then he waited till the minister came back from the Chamber to see if there was any new manœuvre to invent and superintend. Then this ministerial sybarite dressed and dined, and made the round of twelve or fifteen salons between eight in the evening and three in the morning. He talked with journalists at the Opéra, for with them he was on the best of terms. There had been a continual exchange of small services. He gave out his false news and swallowed down theirs; he prevented them from attacking such and such a minister on such and such a point —it would give real pain, he said, to their wives or mistresses.

"Say that the proposed measure is no good, and prove it if you can; but you must not say that Mariette danced badly. Put the worst construction, if you like, upon our love of our neighbor in petticoats, but do not expose the pranks we played in our salad days. Hang it all! we have all cut our capers, and we never know what we may come to as times go. You that are spicing your paragraphs in the *Constitutionnel* may be a minister yourself some of these days——"

And des Lupeaulx did the journalists a good turn at a pinch; he withdrew obstacles put in the way of producing a piece; presents or a good dinner were forthcoming at the right moment, and he would promise to facilitate the conclusion of a piece of business. He had a liking for literature and patronized the arts. He had autographs and splendid albums and sketches and pictures, *gratis*. And he did artists much service by refraining from doing harm, and

supporting them on occasions when their vanity demanded a satisfaction which cost him little or nothing. Wherefore he was popular in the world of journalists, artists, and actors. Both he and they, to begin with, were infected by the same vices and the same indolence; and they cut jokes so merrily at other people's expense over their cups or between two opera dancers—how they should not have been friends? If des Lupeaulx had not been a secretary-general, he would have been a journalist; for which reason des Lupeaulx never received so much as a scratch through those fifteen years, while epigram was battering the breach through which insurrection would enter in.

The small fry of the department used to see him playing at ball in the garden with his lordship's children, and would rack their brains to discover what he did and the secret of his influence; while the *talons rouges,* the courtiers of men in office, looked upon des Lupeaulx as the most dangerous kind of Mephistopheles, and bowed the knee to him, and paid him back with usury the flatteries that he himself was wont to lavish on his betters. Indecipherable as a hieroglyph though he might be for small men, the secretary-general's uses were as plain as a proportion sum to those who had any interest in discovering them. A Prince of Wagram on a small scale to a ministerial Napoleon, he knew all the secrets of party politics; it was his business to sift advice and ideas, and make preliminary reports; he also confirmed weak-kneed supporters; he brought in propositions and carried them out and buried them; he uttered the "Yes" or "No" which the minister was afraid to pronounce. He bore the brunt of the first explosion of despair or anger; he laughed and mourned with his chief. A mysterious link in a chain that connected many people's interests with the Tuileries, he was discreet as the confessional; sometimes he knew everything, sometimes he knew nothing; sometimes he said for the minister what the minister could not say for himself.

With this Hephæstion, in short, the minister might dare to show himself as he was; he could lay aside his wig and

false teeth, state his scruples, put on dressing-gown and slippers, unbosom himself of his sins, and lay bare the ministerial conscience.

Not that des Lupeaulx lay exactly on a bed of roses. It was his duty to flatter and advise, to give advice in the guise of flattery, and flattery in the form of advice. Politicians in his profession were apt to look yellow enough; and the constant habit of nodding to signify approval, or to appear to do so, gives a peculiar air to the head. Such men would approve indifferently all that was said before them. Their language bristled with "buts," "howevers," and "nevertheless," and formulas such as "for my own part," and "in your place," which pave the way to a contrary opinion; they were particularly fond, be it noted, of the expression "in your place."

In person, Clément des Lupeaulx might be described as the remains of a fine man: five feet four inches in height, not unconscionably fat, with a complexion warmed by good living, a jaded air, a powdered *Titus,* and small eyeglasses set in a slender frame. He was pre-eminently a blond, as his hand indicated; it was a plump hand like an old woman's, a little too blunt perhaps, and short in the nails—a satrap's hand. His feet were not wanting in distinction.

After five o'clock in the afternoon des Lupeaulx always wore black silk open-work stockings, low shoes, black trousers, a kerseymere waistcoat, an unscented cambric handkerchief, a coat of royal blue, with engraved buttons, and a bunch of orders at his buttonhole. In the morning he appeared in a short closely-buttoned jacket (not inappropriate to an intriguer), and a pair of creaking boots hidden by gray trousers. In this costume his bearing suggested a crafty attorney rather than the demeanor of a minister. His eyes had grown glassy with the use of spectacles, till he looked uglier than he really was, if by accident he removed those aids to weak sight. Shrewd judges of human nature and straightforward men who only feel at ease when truth is spoken, found des Lupeaulx intolerable. His gracious man-

ners skimmed the surface of falsehood; his friendly protestations, and the stale pretty speeches which always seemed fresh for imbeciles, were growing threadbare. Any clear-sighted man could see that this was a rotten plank on which it was most desirable not to set foot. And when the fair Célestine Rabourdin deigned to turn her thoughts to making her husband's fortune, she gauged Clément des Lupeaulx pretty accurately, and fell to studying him. Was there still a little sound fibre left? Would the thin lath bear if one crossed ever so lightly over it, from the office to the division, from eight thousand to twelve thousand francs a year? She was no ordinary woman. She fancied that she could hold a blackguard politician in play. And so it came to pass that M. des Lupeaulx was to some extent a cause of the extravagant expenditure of the Rabourdin household.

The Rue Duphot, built in the time of the Empire, is remarkable for a good many houses of elegant appearance, and as a rule their interiors are convenient. Mme. Rabourdin's flat was excellently arranged, an advantage which does much to raise the dignity of household life. From a pretty and sufficiently spacious ante-chamber, lighted from the court-yard, you entered the large drawing-room which looked upon the street. Rabourdin's room and his study lay at the further end of this room to the right, and beyond at a right angle was the dining-room which lay to your left as you entered the ante-chamber. A door to the left of the great drawing-room gave admittance to Mme. Rabourdin's bedroom and dressing-room, and behind, at a right angle, was a little room in which her daughter slept. When Mme. Rabourdin was At Home, her bedroom and Rabourdin's cabinet were thrown open. The space enabled her to receive visitors without drawing down ridicule upon herself; her receptions were not like certain unfortunate attempts at evening parties, when the luxury is too evidently assumed for the occasion, and involves a sacrifice of daily habits.

The drawing-room had been newly hung with yellow silk and brown ornaments. Mme. Rabourdin's room was deco-

rated with real Eastern chintz, and the furniture was in the rococo style. Rabourdin's study inherited the discarded drawing-room hangings, which had been cleaned, and Leprince's fine pictures adorned the walls. The late auctioneer had picked up some enchanting Eastern carpets for trifling sums; his daughter now turned them to account in the dining-room, framing them in priceless old ebony. Wonderful Boule sideboards, also purchased by the late auctioneer, surrounded the walls, and in the midst stood a tortoise-shell clock-case inlaid with gleaming brass scroll-work; the first example of a square-shaped clock which reappeared to do honor to the seventeenth century. The air was fragrant with the scent of flowers; the rooms were tasteful and full of beautiful things; every little thing in them was a work of art in itself; everything was placed to advantage, and in appropriate surroundings. And Mme. Rabourdin herself, dressed with the simplicity and originality which artists can devise, looked as though all these pleasant things were a part of her life; she never spoke of them, she left the charm of her conversation to complete the effect produced by the whole. Thanks to her father, since rococo came into fashion, Célestine had acquired celebrity.

Des Lupeaulx was accustomed to all sorts of splendor, sham and real, but Mme. Rabourdin's house was a surprise to him. An illustration may explain the nature of the charm that worked upon this Parisian Asmodeus. Suppose that a traveler had seen all the best beauty of Italy, Brazil, and India, till he was weary; suppose that on his return to France his way brought him past some lovely little lake, the Lake of Orta, under Monte Rosa, for instance, with its island set in the midst of quiet waters—a spot coyly hidden and left to nature, a wild garden, a lonely but not solitary island with its shapely groves of trees and picturesquely placed statues. The shores all round about it are half-wild, half-cultivated; grandeur and unrest encircle it; but within everything takes human proportions. Here in miniature is the world that our traveler has seen already; but that world has grown

modest and pure; its influences soothe his soul; the delicate charm of the place affects him as music might; it awakens all kinds of associations and harmonious echoes. It is a hermitage, and yet it is life.

It had happened a few days previously that Mme. Firmiani had spoken to des Lupeaulx of Mme. Rabourdin. Mme. Firmiani, one of the most charming women of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, liked Mme. Rabourdin, and used to receive her at her house, and on this occasion she had asked des Lupeaulx simply for the purpose of saying, "Why do you not call on Mme. Rabourdin?" (indicating Célestine). "Her evening parties are delightful; and, what is more, her dinners are—better than mine." Des Lupeaulx accordingly allowed a promise to be extracted from him by the fair Mme. Rabourdin (who raised her eyes to his face for the first time as she spoke), and went to the Rue Duphot. Is there any need to say more? Women have but one stratagem, as Figaro cries; but it never fails.

Des Lupeaulx dined with this mere chief clerk, and registered a vow to go again. Thanks to the decorous and ladylike strategy of the charming woman whom Mme. Colleville dubbed "the Célimène of the Rue Duphot," he had dined there regularly every Friday for a month past, and went of his own accord for a cup of tea on Wednesdays. Only during the last few days, after much delicate and skilful trying of the ground, Mme. Rabourdin had come to the conclusion that she had found the safe and solid spot in the plank. She was sure now of success. The joy she felt in the depths of her soul can only be understood in households that know what it is to wait three or four years for promotion, and to plan out an increase of comfort when the fondly-cherished hope shall be realized. What hardships that hope makes bearable! What prayers are put up to the powers that be! What visits paid to gain the desired end! At last, thanks to her spirited policy, Mme. Rabourdin was to have an income of twenty thousand francs instead of eight. The hour had struck.

"And I shall have managed it very well," she told herself. "I have gone to some little expense, but people are not on the lookout for hidden merits in these days; on the contrary, if a man puts himself in evidence by going into society, keeping up his connections and making new ones, he is sure to get on. After all, the ministers and their friends only take an interest in people whom they see, and Rabourdin knows nothing of the world. If I had not got hold of these three deputies, they might very likely have wanted la Billardière's place; but now that they come here, they would feel ashamed to try to take it. They will be our supporters, not our rivals. I have had to flirt a little; it is lucky for me that there was no need to go further than the first stage with the sort of folly that amuses men."

But a contest, as yet unforeseen, was about to begin for the place; and its actual commencement may be dated from a ministerial dinner, followed by an evening party of a kind which ministers regard as public. The Minister's wife was standing by the fire, and des Lupeaulx was at her side. As he took his cup of coffee, it occurred to him to include Mme. Rabourdin among the seven or eight really remarkable women in Paris. He had done this before; Mme. Rabourdin, like Corporal Trim's Montero cap, was always coming up in conversation.

"Don't say too much about her, my dear friend, or you will spoil it all," the Minister's wife returned, half laughingly.

No woman likes to listen to another woman's praises; they one and all keep a word in reserve, so as to put a little vinegar to the panegyric.

"Poor la Billardière won't last long," remarked His Excellency; "Rabourdin is the next in succession, he is one of our cleverest men. Our predecessors did not behave well to him, although one of them owed his prefecture of police under the Empire to a certain personage who was paid to use his influence for Rabourdin. Frankly, my dear fellow,

you are still young enough yet to be loved for your own sake——"

"If la Billardière's place is Rabourdin's for a certainty, I may be believed if I hold up his wife as a remarkable woman," returned des Lupeaulx, the irony in His Excellency's tones had not escaped him; "still, if Mme. la Comtesse cares to judge for herself——"

"I can ask her to my next ball, that is it, is it not? Your remarkable woman would come when certain ladies will be here to quiz us; they will hear 'Mme. Rabourdin' announced."

"But do not they announce Mme. Firmiani at the house of the Minister of Foreign Affairs?"

"A born Cadignan!——" the newly-made Count broke in quickly, with a withering glance at his secretary-general. Neither His Excellency nor his wife was noble. A good many persons thought that something important was going forward. Those who had come to ask favors kept to the other end of the room. When des Lupeaulx came out, the new-made Countess turned to her husband with, "Des Lupeaulx must be in love, I think."

"Then it will be for the first time in his life," returned the Minister, shrugging his shoulders, as who should say that des Lupeaulx was not taken up with such trifles.

Then the Minister beheld a deputy of the Right Centre entering the room, and left his wife to coax over a faltering vote. But it so happened that the deputy was overwhelmed by an unforeseen disaster, and wanted to secure the Minister's influence by coming to announce in strict confidence that he would be forced to send in his resignation in a few days' time. And His Excellency, warned in time, could get his batteries into play before the Opposition had a chance.

The Minister (which is to say, des Lupeaulx) had included among the dinner guests a personage who is practically appointed for life in every government department. This individual, being not a little puzzled to know what to do with himself, and anxious to give himself a countenance,

happened to stand planted on both feet with his legs close together, very much after the manner of an Egyptian terminal. He was waiting, near the hearth, for an opportunity of expressing his thanks to the secretary-general; indeed, the abrupt retreat made by that worthy took him by surprise just as he was about to formulate his little compliment. The functionary in question was, in fact, none other than the cashier of the department, the one employé who never shook in his shoes over a change of government. In those days the Chamber did not higgle over the budget as it is wont to do in the present degenerate times; it did not cut down the emoluments of office to effect what may be called "cheese-paring economies" in kitchen phraseology. Every minister on coming into office received a fixed sum for "expenses of removal." It costs as much, alas! to come in as to go out of office; and the installation entails expenses of every sort and description which need not be recorded here. The allowance for expenses used to consist of twenty-five pretty little thousand-franc notes.

When the ordinance appeared in the *Moniteur,* while all officials, great and small, were grouped about their stoves or open hearths, as the case might be, revolving the questions—"What is this one going to do? Will he increase the number of clerks? Or will he dismiss two and take on three?——" while all this was going forward, I say, the placid cashier used to bring out twenty-five notes and pin them together, engraving a joyful expression meanwhile upon his beadle's countenance. This done, he skipped up the staircase to the residence, and was admitted to His Excellency's presence the first thing in the morning; for servants are wont to confuse the notions of the power of money with the custodian thereof, the cash-box with its contents, the idea and its outward and visible manifestation. The cashier, therefore, always came upon the ministerial couple in that first blush of rapture when a statesman is in a benign humor, and a good fellow for the nonce. In reply to the Minister's inquiry, "What do you want?" the cashier produced his bits of paper, with a

speech to the effect that he had hastened to bring His Excellency the customary indemnity; he then explained the why and wherefore of the allowance to the astonished and delighted lady, who never failed to take some portion, and not unfrequently took the whole. An indemnity for expenses of removal comes within the province of housekeeping. The cashier turned his compliment, slipping in a few phrases for the Minister's benefit. "If His Excellency vouchsafed to confirm him in his appointment, if he was satisfied with the purely mechanical service which," etc., etc. And as the man who brings twenty-five thousand francs is always a good public servant, the cashier never failed to receive the desired confirmation in a post whence he watched ministers come and go and come again for a quarter of a century. Then he would put himself at madame's disposal; he would bring the thirteen thousand francs every month at the convenient time, a little earlier or later as required, and thus, to use the ancient monastic expression, "he kept a vote in the chapter."

The Sieur Saillard had been a book-keeper at the Treasury while the Treasury kept books on a system of double-entry; but the plan was afterwards given up, and they gave him a cashier's place by way of compensation. Book-keeping was his one strong point; he was little good at anything else. He was a burly, fat old gentleman, round as a figure 0, and simple in the extreme; he walked like an elephant at a measured pace to and from the Place Royale, where he lived in a house of his own. He had a companion on his daily way, in the shape of his son-in-law, M. Isidore Baudoyer, the chief clerk in M. de la Billardière's division, and in consequence Rabourdin's colleague. Baudoyer had married Saillard's only daughter Elizabeth, and, naturally, took up his abode on a floor above his father-in-law. Nobody in the whole department doubted Saillard's stupidity, but nobody at the same time knew how far his stupidity would go; it was so dense that no one could insinuate a question into it; it had no hollow sounding spots; it absorbed everything, and gave nothing

out. Bixiou (a clerk of whom mention will presently be made) had drawn a caricature of the cashier, a bewigged head surmounting an egg, with two tiny legs beneath, and the inscription—"Born to pay and receive money without making a mistake. A little less luck, and he would have been a porter at the Bank of France; a little more ambition, and the Government would have thanked him for his services."

To return to the Minister. At this present moment he was looking fixedly at his cashier, much as he might have gazed at a hat-peg or at the ceiling, without imagining, that is to say, that the peg could hear what he said, or understand a single word.

"I am so much the more anxious that everything should be arranged with the prefect with the utmost secrecy," His Excellency was saying to the retiring deputy, "because des Lupeaulx has some idea of the kind. His bit of a place is somewhere in your part of the country, and we don't want him in the House."

"He has not the electoral qualifications, and he is not old enough," said the deputy.

"That is so, but you know how Casimir Périer decided with regard to the age limit. As to annual income, des Lupeaulx has something, though it doesn't amount to much; but the law made no provision for increase of landed property, and he might buy more.—Committees give a good foothold to a deputy of the Centre, and we could not openly oppose the goodwill that people would show to serve our dear friend."

"But where would he find the money to buy land?"

"How did Manuel become the possessor of a house in Paris?" retorted the Minister.

The hat-peg meanwhile was listening, and listening very reluctantly. The two men had lowered their voices and spoke rapidly; but every sound, by some as yet unexplained law of acoustics, reached Saillard's ears. And what were the feelings of that worthy, do you suppose, while he listened to

these political confidences? He experienced the most poignant alarm. There are guileless people who are reduced to despair if they appear to be listening to remarks that they are not intended to hear, if they intrude where they are not wanted, or seem to be inquisitive when they are really discreet; and Saillard was one of them. He glided over the carpet in such a sort that when the Minister became aware of his existence, he was half-way across the room. Saillard was a fanatical official. He was incapable of the slightest indiscretion. If His Excellency had but known that the cashier was in his counsel, he would have had no need to do more than say "Mum." Saillard saw that the rooms were beginning to fill with courtiers of office, went down to a cab hired by the hour for such costly occasions as this, and returned to the Place Royale.

While old Saillard was making his way across Paris, his beloved Elizabeth and his son-in-law were engaged in playing a virtuous game of boston with the Abbé Gaudron, their director, and a neighbor or two. Another visitor was also present. This was a certain Martin Falleix, a brass-founder of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, whom Saillard had set up in business. Falleix, an honest Auvergnat, had come to Paris with his cauldron on his back, and promptly found work with the Brézacs, a firm that bought old châteaux to pull down. At the age of twenty-seven, Martin Falleix, being eager, like every one else, to get on in life, had the good fortune to be taken into partnership by M. Saillard. He was to be the active partner, he was to exploit a patent invention in brass-founding (gold medal awarded at the Exhibition in 1825).

Mme. Baudoyer, whose only daughter was just at the tail-end of her twelfth year (to quote old Saillard), had views of her own upon Falleix, a thick-set, swarthy young fellow, active, sharp-witted, and honest. She was forming him. According to her ideas, the education consisted in teaching the good Auvergnat to play boston, to hold his cards properly, to allow no one to see his hand; to shave and wash his hands with coarse common soap before he came to them; to refrain

from swearing, to speak French as they spoke it, to brush his hair erect instead of flattening it down, and to discard shoes for boots, and sackcloth shirts for calico. Only a week since, Elizabeth Baudoyer succeeded in persuading Falleix to give up two huge flat earrings like cask-hoops.

"You are going too far, Mme. Baudoyer," said he, as she rejoiced over this sacrifice; "you are getting too much ascendency over me. You make me brush my teeth (which loosens them); before long you will make me brush my nails and curl my hair, and that will never do. They don't like foppery in our line of business."

Elizabeth Baudoyer, *née* Saillard, was a type that always escapes the artist by the very fact that it is so commonplace. Yet, nevertheless, such figures ought to be sketched, for they represent the lower middle class in Paris, the rank just above the well-to-do artisan. Their merits are almost defects, and there is nothing lovable about their faults; but their way of life, humdrum and uninteresting though it is, does not lack a certain character of its own.

Elizabeth had a certain puny unwholesome look, which was not good to see. She was barely four feet high, and so thin that her waist measured scarcely half an ell. Her thin features were crowded into the middle of her face; a certain vague resemblance to a weasel was the result. She was thirty years old and more, but she looked more like a girl of sixteen or seventeen. There was little brightness in the china-blue eyes under heavy eyelids and lashes that met the arch of eyebrows. Everything about Elizabeth was insignificant; she had pale flax-colored hair; the flat shiny surfaces of her forehead seemed to catch the light; her complexion was gray, almost livid in hue. The lower part of her face was triangular rather than oval in shape, but her features, generally speaking, were crooked, and the outlines irregular. Lastly, she had a sub-acid voice, with a pretty enough range of intonations. Elizabeth Baudoyer was the very type of the lower middle-class housewife who counsels her husband at night from her pillow; there is no merit in

her virtues, no motive in her ambition, it is simply a development of domestic egoism. If Elizabeth had lived in the provinces, she would have tried to round out the property; as her husband happened to be in a Government office, she wanted advancement. The story of Elizabeth's childhood and girlhood will bring the whole woman before you; it is the history of the Saillard couple.

M. Saillard had married the daughter of a second-hand furniture dealer, one Bidault, who set up business under the arcades of the Great Market. M. and Mme. Saillard had a hard struggle in those early days; but now, after thirty-three years of married life and twenty-nine of work at the office, the fortune of "the Saillards" (as they were called by their acquaintances) consisted of sixty thousand francs in Falleix's business; the big house in the Place Royale, purchased for forty thousand francs in 1804; and thirty-six thousand livres paid down as their daughter's marriage portion. About fifty thousand francs of their capital had come to them on the death of Widow Bidault, Mme. Saillard's mother. Saillard's post had brought in a steady income of four thousand five hundred francs; no one coveted his place for a long while, because there were no prospects of promotion. This money had been saved up, sou by sou, by sordid frugality, and very carefully put out to interest. As a matter of fact, the Saillards knew of but one way of investing money; they used to take their savings, five thousand francs at a time, to their notary, M. Sorbier, Cardot's predecessor, and he arranged to lend it on mortgages. They were always careful to take the first mortgage, with a further guarantee secured on the wife's property if the borrower were a married man.

At this point of their history their big house was worth a hundred thousand francs, and brought them in eight thousand. Falleix paid seven per cent on his capital before reckoning up the profits, which were equally divided. Altogether, the Saillards possessed an income of seventeen thousand francs at the least. To have the Cross and retire on a pension was old Saillard's one ambition.

Elizabeth's youth had been spent in continual drudgery in a family with such laborious habits and such narrow ideas. Great was the discussion before the purchase of a new hat for Saillard; the career of a coat was reckoned by years; umbrellas were carefully hung up from a brass ring.

No repairs had been made in the house since 1804. The Saillard's ground-floor flat was precisely in the condition in which the previous owners left it; but the gilding had departed from the frames of the pier-glasses, and the painted friezes over the doors were almost invisible beneath the accumulated grime of years. The great spacious rooms, with carved marble chimney-pieces and ceilings worthy of Versailles, were filled with the furniture left by the Widow Bidault. This consisted of easy-chairs of walnut wood, covered with tapestry, rosewood chests of drawers, old-fashioned stands with brass rims and cracked white marble-tops; and a chaos of bargains, in short, picked up by the furniture-dealer in the Great Market. Among these was a superb Boule bureau, to which fashion had not yet restored its proper value. The pictures had been selected entirely for their handsome frames; the chinaware was distinctly heterogeneous; a set of splendid Oriental china dessert plates, for instance, was eked out with porcelain from every possible factory; the silver was a collection of odd lots; the cut glass was old-fashioned; the table linen fine damask. They slept in a tomb-shaped bedstead with chintz curtains hung from a coronal.

Amid all these relics of the past, Mme. Saillard used to live in her low, modern mahogany armchair with her feet on a foot-warmer, every hole in the latter article of furniture charred and blackened. Her chair was drawn up to the grate, where a heap of dead ashes took the place of a fire. On the chimney-piece there stood a clock-case, one or two old-fashioned bronze ornaments, and some flowered candle-sconces. These last were empty however. Mme. Saillard had a *martinet* for her own use, a small, flat brass candlestick with a long handle; and the candles she used were long tallow dips that guttered as they burned. In Mme. Saillard's

countenance, in spite of wrinkles, you could read wilfulness, severity, and narrow-mindedness; together with a fair and square honesty, a pitiless creed, an undisguised stinginess, and the quiet of a clear conscience. You may see faces thus composed by nature among portraits of the wives of Flemish burgomasters; but these latter are clad in splendid velvets and precious stuffs. Mme. Saillard wore no such robes. She adhered to the old-fashioned garments known as *cottes* in Picardy and Touraine, and as *cotillons* over the rest of France—a petticoat gathered in thick overlying pleats at the back and sides. The upper part of her person was buttoned into a short jacket, another bit of old-world costume, like the butterfly caps and high-heeled shoes which she still continued to wear. She knitted stockings for herself and her husband and for an uncle as well. And although she was fifty-seven years old, and fairly entitled to live at ease after her laborious struggles with domestic economy, she used to knit, after the manner of countrywomen, as she talked or went about the house, or strolled round the garden, or took a peep into the kitchen to see how things were going there.

Niggardliness, at first compelled by painful necessity, had become a habit with the Saillards. When old Saillard came home from the office he took off his coat and worked in his garden. It was a pretty garden divided off from the yard by an iron railing; he had reserved it and kept it in order himself. Elizabeth had gone marketing with her mother in the morning; and, indeed, the two women did all the work of the house. The mother could cook a duck with turnips to admiration; but old Saillard maintained that for serving up the remains of a leg of mutton with onions, Elizabeth had not her equal. "You could eat your uncle that way and never find it out."

As soon as Elizabeth could hold a needle, her mother made her mend her father's clothes and the house linen. The girl was always busy as a servant over a servant's work; she never went out alone. They lived but a few paces away from the Boulevard de Temple; consequently, the Gaîté, the Ambigu-

Comique, and Franconi's were close at hand, and the Porte Saint-Martin not very far away, yet Elizabeth had never been "to the play." When the fancy took her "to see what it was like," M. Baudoyer, by way of doing things handsomely, took her to the Opéra so that she might see the finest play of all (M. Gaudron having, of course, given permission). They were giving *Le Laboureur Chinois* at that time. Elizabeth thought "the play" as dull as ditchwater. She did not want to go again. On Sundays, after she had gone four times to and fro between the Place Royale and the Church of St. Paul (for her mother saw that she was punctual in the practice of religious duties and precepts), her father and mother took her to the Café Turc, where they seated themselves on chairs placed between a barrier and the wall. The Café Turc at that time was the resort of all the beauty and fashion of the Marais, the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, and adjacent neighborhoods; the Saillards always went early to secure their favorite place, and then amused themselves by watching the passers-by.

Elizabeth had never worn anything but print gowns in summer, and merino in winter. She made her own dresses. Her mother only allowed her twenty francs a month; but her father was very fond of her, and tempered this rigor with occasional presents. Of "profane literature," as the Abbé Gaudron (curate of Saint Paul's and the family oracle) was pleased to qualify it, Elizabeth knew nothing whatsoever. The system had borne its fruits. Compelled to find an outlet for her feelings in some passion, Elizabeth grew greedy of gain; not that she was lacking in intelligence or perspicacity, but ignorance and her creed had shut her in with a circle of brass. She had nothing on which to exercise her faculties, save the most trivial affairs of daily life; and as she had few things to think about, the whole force of her nature was brought to bear on the matter in hand. Her natural intelligence, being shackled by her religious opinions, could only exert itself within the limits imposed by casuistry, and casuistry becomes a very storehouse of subtleties from which

self-interest selects shifts and evasions. Elizabeth was quite capable of asking her neighbor to do evil that she herself might reap the full benefit thereof; resembling in this respect various saintly personages in whom religion has not altogether extinguished ambition—with these, indeed, she had other points in common; she was relentless in pursuit of her end, underhand in her measures. When offended, she watched her antagonists with feline patience till she had accomplished a complete and cold-blooded revenge to be put down to the account of Providence.

Until the time of Elizabeth's marriage, the Saillards saw no visitors except the Abbé Gaudron, the Auvergnat priest, nominated to the curacy of St. Paul's since the re-establishment of religious worship. This churchman had been friendly with the late Mme. Bidault. Mme. Saillard's paternal uncle was also an occasional visitor. He had been a paper merchant, but he had retired in the year II. of the Republic, at the age of sixty-nine. He never came except on Sundays, because no business could be done on that day.

As for Bidault's personal appearance, there was not much room in the little old man's olive-hued visage for anything but a red bibulous nose and two little vulture-like slits of eyes. His grizzled locks were allowed to hang loose under the brim of his cocked hat. The tabs of his knee-breeches projected grotesquely beyond the buckles. He wore cotton stockings knitted by his niece (*la petite Saillard* he used to call her), thick shoes with silver buckles, and a greatcoat of many colors. Altogether he looked very much like the sexton-beadle-bellringer-gravedigger-chanter of some village church; a sort of person whom you might take for some freak of the caricaturist, until you met him in real life. Even at this day he used to come on foot to dine with them, and walk back afterwards to the Rue Grenétat, where he lived on a third floor. Bidault was a bill-discounter. The Quartier Saint-Martin, the scene of his professional activity, had nicknamed him Gigonnet, from his peculiar jerky, feverish manner of picking his way in the streets. M. Bidault went into

the bill-discounting line in the year II. of the Republic with a Dutchman, the Sieur Werbrust, a crony of Gobseck's, for his partner.

These, it has been said, were at one time the Saillards' only visitors; but afterwards, old Saillard struck up an acquaintance with M. and Mme. Transon in the church-warden's pew at St. Paul's. The Transons, wholesale earthenware dealers in the Rue de Lesdiguières, took an interest in Elizabeth, and it was with a view to finding a husband for her that they introduced young Isidore Baudoyer to the Saillards. The good understanding between M. and Mme. Baudoyer and the Saillard family was confirmed by Gigonnet's approbation. He had employed Mme. Baudoyer's brother, the Sieur Mitral, as his bailiff for many years; and about this time Mitral was thinking of retiring to a pretty house at Ile-Adam. M. and Mme. Baudoyer, Isidore's father and mother, respectable leather-dressers in the Rue Censier, had put by a little money year by year in a jog-trot business. When they had married their only son and made over fifty thousand francs to him, they also thought of going to live in the country; it was they, indeed, who had fixed upon Ile-Adam, and attracted Mitral to that spot; but they still came frequently to Paris, where they had kept a *pied-à-terre* in the house in the Rue Censier which Isidore received on his marriage. The Baudoyers had an income of a thousand crowns still left after providing for their son.

M. Mitral, owner of a sinister-looking wig, and a visage the color of Seine water, illuminated by eyes of the hue of Spanish snuff, was as cool as a well-rope; he was a secretive, mouse-like creature; no one knew about his money; but he probably did in his corner as Gigonnet did in the Quartier Saint-Martin.

But if the family circle grew wider, their ideas and habits underwent no corresponding change. They kept all the family festivals; birthdays and wedding-days; all the saints' days of father and mother, son-in-law, daughter and granddaughter; Easter, Christmas, New Year's Day, and Twelfth

Night. And as these occasions always demanded a great sweeping and general cleaning of the house, they might be said to combine practical utility with the joys of domestic life. Then out came the presents; useful gifts produced with much pomp and circumstance and accompaniment of bouquets; a pair of silk stocking or a velvet skull-cap for Saillard; gold earrings, or silver plate for Elizabeth or her husband (for whom they were making up a complete service by degrees), or a new silk petticoat for Mme. Saillard, who kept the stuff laid by in the piece. And before the presents were given, the recipient was always made to sit in an armchair, while the rest bade him:

"Guess what we are going to give you!"

Finally, they sat down to a grand dinner, which lasted for five hours. M. Gaudron was invited, and Falleix and Rabourdin and M. Gothard (formerly M. Baudoyer's deputy), and M. Bataille, captain of the company in which Baudoyer and his father-in-law were enrolled. M. Cardot had a standing invitation, but, like Rabourdin, he only appeared one time in six. They used to sing over the dessert, and embrace each other with enthusiasm amid wishes for all possible good luck; and then the presents were on view, and all the guests must give their opinion of them. On the day of the velvet skull-cap, Saillard wore the article in question on his head during the dessert, to the general satisfaction. In the evening more acquaintances came in, and a dance followed. A single violin did duty for a band for a long while; but for the last six years, M. Godard, a great amateur of the flute, had contributed the shrill sounds of a flageolet to the festivity. The cook, Mme. Baudoyer's general servant, and old Catherine, Mme. Saillard's maid, stood looking on in the doorway with the porter and his wife; and a crown of three livres was given to them to buy wine and coffee.

The whole family circle regarded Baudoyer and Saillard as men of transcendent ability; they were in the employ of the Government; they had made their way by sheer merit; they worked in concert with the Minister, so it was said;

they owed their success entirely to their talents. Baudoyer was generally considered to be the more capable man of the two, because his work as chief clerk was allowed to be more arduous and complex than book-keeping. And besides, Isidore had had the genius to study, although he was the son of a leather dresser in the Rue Censier; he had had the audacity also to give up his father's business to enter a Government office, and had reached a high position. As he was a man of few words, he was supposed to be a deep thinker; "he would perhaps represent the eighth arrondissement some day," said the Transons. And as often as Gigonnet heard this kind of talk, he would purse up lips that were sufficiently pinched already, and glance at his grand-niece Elizabeth.

As to physique, Isidore was a big heavy man of seven-and-thirty; he perspired easily; his head suggested hydrocephalus. It was an enormous head covered with closely cropped chestnut hair, and joined to the neck by a thick fleshy roll that filled up his coat collar. He had the arms of a Hercules, the hands of a Domitian, and a waist girth which sober living kept "within the limits of the majestic," to quote Brillat-Savarin. In face he was very much like the Emperor Alexander. You recognized the Tartar type in the little eyes, in a nose depressed in the middle and raised at the tip, in the chilly lips and short chin. His forehead was narrow and low. Isidore was of lymphatic temperament, but time had no whit abated an excessive conjugal attachment. In spite of his likeness to the handsome Russian Emperor and the terrific Domitian, Isidore Baudoyer was nothing but a slave of red-tape; he was not very fit for the post of chief clerk, but he was thoroughly accustomed to the routine work, and his vacuity lay beneath such a thick covering that no scalpel as yet had probed it. He had displayed the patience and sagacity of the ox during those days of hard study; and this fact, together with his square head, had deceived his relatives. They took him for a man of extraordinary abilities.

At the office he was punctilious, pedantic, pompous, and

fussy; a perfect terror to his clerks. He was always making observations for their benefit, always insisting upon commas and full stops, always a stickler for rules and regulations, and so terribly punctual that not one of the clerks failed to be in his place before he came in.

Baudoyer used to wear a coat of cornflower blue with yellow buttons, a buff waistcoat, gray trousers, and a colored stock. He had big feet, and his boots fitted him badly. His watch chain was adorned with a huge bunch of seals and trinklets, among which he still retained the "American seeds" which used to be the fashion in the year VII.; and this in 1824!

The restraints of religion and rigid habits of life were forces that bound this family together; they had, moreover, one common aim to unite them—the thought of making money was the compass which guided their course. Elizabeth Baudoyer was obliged to commune with herself for lack of any one to comprehend her ideas; for she felt that she was not among equals who could understand them. Facts had compelled her to form her own conclusions of her husband, but as a woman of rigid principle she did her best to keep up M. Baudoyer's reputation; she showed profound respect for him, honoring in him the father of her child and her husband; the "temporal power," in short, as the Abbé Gaudron put it. For which reason she would have thought it a deadly sin to allow a stranger to read her real opinion of her vapid mate in any glance, or gesture, or word. She even professed a passive obedience to his will in all things. Rumors of the outer world reached her ears, she noted them and made her own comparisons; and so sound was her judgment of men and affairs, that she became an oracle in private for the two functionaries. Indeed, at the time when this history begins, they had unconsciously reached the point of doing nothing without consulting her.

"She is a sharp one, is Elizabeth!" old Saillard used to say ingenuously. But Baudoyer was too much of a fool not to be puffed up by his ill-founded reputation in the Quartier

Saint-Antoine. He would not allow that his wife was clever, while he turned her cleverness to account. Elizabeth felt convinced that her uncle Bidault, *alias* Gigonnet, must be a rich man, a capitalist with an enormous turnover. By the light of self-interest, she read des Lupeaulx better than the Minister read him. She saw that she was mated with a fool; she shrewdly suspected that life might have been something very different for her; but she preferred to leave that might-have-been unexplored. All the gentle affections of Elizabeth's nature found satisfaction in her daughter; she spared her little girl the drudgery that she had known; she loved her child, and thought that this was all that could be expected of her. It was for that daughter's sake that she had persuaded her father to take the ordinary step of going into partnership with Falleix. Falleix had been introduced to the family by old Bidault, who lent him money on pledges. But Falleix found his old fellow countryman too dear; he complained with much candor before the Saillards that Gigonnet was asking eighteen per cent of an Auvergnat. Old Mme. Saillard went so far as to reproach her relative.

"It is just because he is an Auvergnat that I only ask eighteen per cent!" retorted Gigonnet. It was about that time that Falleix, aged twenty-eight, had hit upon a new invention. It seemed to Saillard, to whom he explained it, that the young man "talked straight" (to use an expression from Saillard's dictionary), and that there was a fortune to be made out of his idea. Elizabeth at once conceived the notion of keeping Falleix to "simmer" for her daughter, and forming her son-in-law herself. She was looking seven years ahead. Martin Falleix's respect for Mme. Baudoyer knew no bounds; he recognized her intellectual superiority. If he had made millions, he would still have been devoted to the house, where he was made one of the family circle. Elizabeth's little girl had been taught already to fill his glass prettily and to take his hat when he came.

When M. Saillard came home after the Minister's dinner

party, the game of boston was in full swing. Elizabeth was advising Falleix; old Mme. Saillard, knitting in the fireside corner, was looking over the curate's hand; and M. Baudoyer, impassive as a mile-stone, was exerting his intelligence to discover where the cards were. Mitral sat opposite. He had come up from Ile-Adam for Christmas. Nobody moved when Saillard came in. For several minutes he walked up and down the room, his broad countenance puckered by unwonted mental exercise.

"It is always the way when he dines with the Minister; luckily, it only happens twice a year, or they would just kill him outright," remarked Mme. Saillard. "Saillard was not made to be in the government——" Aloud she added, "Saillard, I say, I hope you are not going to keep your best clothes on, your silk breeches, and Elbeuf cloth coat? Just go and take your things off; don't wear them out here for nothing: *ma mère.*"

"There is something the matter with your father," Baudoyer remarked to his wife, when the cashier had gone to change his clothes in his fireless room.

"Perhaps M. de la Billardière is dead," Elizabeth returned simply; "he is anxious that you should have the place, and that worries him."

"If I can be of service to you in any way, command me," said the curate of Saint Paul's, with a bow; "I have the honor to be known to Mme. la Dauphine. In our times all offices should be filled by devoted subjects and men of staunch religious principle."

"Oh come!" said Falleix; "do men of merit want patronage if they are to get on in your line? I did the right thing when I turned brass-founder; custom comes to find you out if you make a good article."

"The Government, sir, is the Government," interrupted Baudoyer; "never attack it here."

"You are talking like the *Constitutionnel,* in fact," said the curate.

"Just the sort of thing the *Constitutionnel* always says," assented Baudoyer, who never saw the paper.

The cashier fully believed that his son-in-law was as much Rabourdin's superior in intellect "as God was above St. Crispin" (to use his own expression); still, the good soul's desire for the step was a guileless wish. He wanted success; he wanted it as all employés want their step, with a vehement, intense, unreflecting, brutal desire to get on; but, at the same time, he must have it, as he wished to have the Cross of the Legion of Honor, to wit, entirely through his own merits, and with a clear conscience. To his way of thinking, if a man had sat for twenty-five years behind a grating in a public office, he might be said to have given his life for his country, and had fairly earned the Cross. He could think of no way of serving the interests of his son-in-law, save by putting in a word for him with the Minister's wife when he took her the monthly stipend.

"Well, Saillard, you look as if you had lost all your relatives! Speak out, my boy, pray tell us something," cried Mme. Saillard when he came in again.

Saillard turned on his heel, with a sign to his daughter, intimating that politics were forbidden while visitors were present.

When M. Mitral and the curate had taken their departure, Saillard pushed back the table, and sat down in his armchair. He had a way of seating himself which meant that a piece of office gossip was about to be communicated; a sequence of movements as unmistakable as the three raps on the stage at the Comédie-Française. First of all, he pledged his wife and daughter and son-in-law to the most profound secrecy (for however mild the gossip might be, their places, so he was wont to say, depended upon their discretion); then he brought out his incomprehensible riddle. How a deputy was about to resign; how the secretary-general, very reasonably, wanted to be nominated to succeed him; how the Minister was privately thwarting the wish of one of his firmest supporters and most zealous servants; and lastly, how the age limit and pecuniary qualifications had been discussed. Then came an avalanche of conjectures, washed away by a torrent of argu-

ments on the part of the two officials, who kept up an exchange of ponderous banalities. As for Elizabeth, she asked but three questions.

"If M. des Lupeaulx is for us, can he carry Baudoyer's nomination?"

"*Quien!* Begad, he could!" cried the cashier.

Elizabeth pondered this. "In 1814, Uncle Bidault and his friend Gobseck obliged him," she thought. Aloud she asked, "Is he still in debt?"

"Yes-s-s," said the cashier, with a doleful prolongation of the final sibilant. "They tried to attach his salary, but they were stopped by an order from headquarters, an injunction at sight."

"Then, where is his estate of the Lupeaulx?"

"*Quien!* begad! Your grandfather and great-uncle Bidault came from the place, so did Falleix; it is not far from the arrondissement of this deputy that is coming off guard——"

When her colossus of a husband was in bed, Elizabeth bent over him, and though he had sneered at her questions for "crotchets," she said:

"Dear, perhaps you are going to have M. de la Billardière's place."

"There you are again with your fancies!" cried Baudoyer. "Just leave M. Gaudron to speak to the Dauphiness, and don't meddle with the office."

At eleven o'clock, just as all was quiet in the Place Royale, M. des Lupeaulx left the Opéra to go to the Rue Duphot. It chanced to be one of Mme. Rabourdin's most brilliant Wednesdays. A good many frequenters of her house had come in after the theatre to swell the groups already assembled in her rooms, and many celebrities were there: Canalis the poet, the painter Schinner, Dr. Bianchon, Lucien de Rubempré, Octave de Camps, the Comte de Granville, the Vicomte de Fontaine, du Bruel, writer of vaudevilles, Andoche Finot the journalist, Derville, one of the longest-headed lawyers of the

day; the Comte du Châtelet, and du Tillet the banker, were all present, with several young men of fashion like Paul de Manerville and the young Vicomte de Portenduère.

Célestine was dispensing tea when the secretary-general came in. Her dress suited her well that evening. She wore a perfectly plain black velvet gown and a black gauze scarf; her hair was carefully smoothed beneath a high coronet of plaits, ringlets in the English fashion fell on each side of her face. Her chief distinction was an artist's Italian negligence, the ease with which she understood everything, and her gracious way of welcoming her friends' least wishes. Nature had given her a slender figure, so that she could turn swiftly at the first questioning word; her eyes were Oriental in shape, and obliquely set in Chinese fashion, so that they could glance sidewards. Her soft, insinuating voice was so well under control, that she could throw a caressing charm into every word, even her most spontaneous utterances; her feet were such as you only see in portraits, for in this one respect painters may flatter their sitters without sinning against the laws of anatomy. Like most brunettes, she looked a little sallow by daylight, but at night her complexion was dazzling, setting off her dark eyes and hair. Lastly, the firm, slender outlines of her form put an artist in mind of the Venus of the Middle Ages discovered by Jean Goujon, the great sculptor favored by Diane de Poitiers.

Des Lupeaulx stopped in the doorway, and leaned his shoulder against the frame. He was accustomed to spy out men's ideas; he could not refuse himself the pleasure of spying a woman's feelings; for Célestine interested him far more than any woman had done before. And des Lupeaulx had reached an age when men claim much from women. The first white hairs are the signal for the last passions; and these are the most tumultuous of all, for they are stimulated by the last heat of youth and the sense of exhaustion. The fortieth year is the age for follies, the age when a man desires to be loved for his own sake. To love at forty is no longer sufficient in itself, as it used to be when he was young, and could be

happy in falling in love at random in Cherubino's fashion. At forty nothing less than all will satisfy a man, and he is afraid lest he should obtain nothing; whereas at five-and-twenty, he has so much, that it is not worth while to exert his will. There is so much strength to spare at five-and-twenty, that it may be squandered with impunity; but at forty a man takes abuse of strength for vigor. The thoughts that filled des Lupeaulx's mind at this moment were surely melancholy ones, for the elderly beau's countenance had visibly lengthened; the agreeable smile which lent expression to his face, and did duty as a mask, had ceased to contract his features; the real man was visible; it was not a pleasant sight. Rabourdin noticed it.

"What has come to him?" he wondered. "Is he in disgrace?" But the secretary-general was merely reflecting that he had been dropped once before somewhat too promptly by pretty Mme. Colleville, whose intentions had been precisely the same as Célestine's own. Rabourdin also saw that the would-be statesman's eyes were fixed upon his wife; and he made a note of their expression in his memory. Rabourdin was too clearsighted an observer not to see through des Lupeaulx; indeed, he felt the most thorough contempt for the secretary-general; but if a man is much engrossed by some pursuit, his feelings are less apt to rise to the surface, and mental absorption in the work that he loves is equivalent to the cleverest dissimulation of his attitude of mind. For this reason, Rabourdin's opinions were like a sealed book to des Lupeaulx. The chief clerk was displeased by the upstart politician's presence in his house; but he had not cared to cross Célestine's will. He happened to be chatting confidentially at the moment with a supernumerary, a young clerk destined to play a part in the intrigue set on foot by la Billardière's approaching death, so that it was but a wandering attention that he gave to Célestine and des Lupeaulx.

Some account of the supernumerary ought perhaps to be given here for the benefit of our nephews, and, at the same time, for the edification of foreign readers.

The supernumerary is to the administration what the chorister boy is to the church; what the child of the company is to the regiment, or the "rat" to the theatre—an ingenuous, innocent being, a creature blinded by illusions. How far should we go without illusions? On the strength of illusions we struggle with the difficulties of art while we scarce keep the wolf from the door, we digest the rudiments of the sciences with faith drawn from the same source. Illusions mean unbounded faith, and the supernumerary has faith in the administration. He does not take it for the unfeeling, cold-blooded, hard-hearted system that it is.

Of supernumeraries, there are but two kinds—the well-to-do and the poor. The poor supernumerary is rich in hope, and needs a berth; the well-to-do supernumerary is poor in spirit, and has need of nothing. No well-to-do family is so simple as to put a man of brains into the administration. The well-to-do supernumerary is usually committed to the care of a senior clerk, or placed under the eye of a director-general, to undergo his initiation into the "pure comedy" of the civil service, as it would be styled by that profound philosopher Bilboquet. The horrors of probation are mitigated for him until he receives a definite appointment. Government offices are never afraid of the well-to-do supernumerary. The clerks all know that he is not at all dangerous; he aims at nothing short of the highest places in the service.

At this time many families were asking, "What shall we do with our boys?" There were no chances of getting on in the army. Special careers, such as the navy, the mines, civil and military engineering, and professorships, are either hedged about with regulations, or closed by competition; whereas the rotatory movement which metamorphoses clerks in a government office into prefects, sub-prefects, or receivers and controllers of taxes, and the like (in much the same way as the little figures revolve in a magic-lantern),—this movement, to repeat, is subject to no rules, and there are no terms to keep. Through this hole in the administrative system, therefore, behold the well-to-do supernumeraries emerge;

these are young men who drive cabs about town, and wear good clothes and moustaches, and behave, one and all of them, as insolently as any self-made upstart. The well-to-do supernumerary was almost invariably a nephew or a cousin or a relative of some minister, or civil servant, or of a very influential peer. Journalists used to be pretty hard upon him; not so the established clerks; they aided and abetted the young gentleman, and made interest with him.

But the poor supernumerary (the only genuine kind) is, in nearly every case, a widow's son. His father before him probably was a clerk in a government office; his mother lives on a meagre pension, and starves herself to support her boy till he can get a permanent post as copying clerk; she dies while he is within sight of that marshal's bâton of the profession—the post of draughting clerk, with a prospect of drawing up reports and formulating orders for the term of his natural life, or even a problematical chance of becoming a senior clerk. This kind of supernumerary always lives in some neighborhood where rents are low, and leaves it at an early hour. For him the state of the weather is the real Eastern Question. He must walk the whole way to the office, and keep his boots clean, and take care of his clothes; he must make allowance for the time that he is like to lose if a heavy shower forces him to take shelter. The supernumerary has plenty to think about! Pavements in the streets and flagstones along the quays and boulevards were boons indeed for him. If any strange chance should bring you out into the streets of Paris between half-past seven and eight o'clock of a winter morning, when there is a sharp frost, or the weather is generally unpleasant; and if, furthermore, you happen to see a pallid, timorous youth walking along without a cigar in his mouth—look at his pocket; you are pretty sure to discover the outlines of the roll which his mother gave him when he left home, so that he might hold out, without damage to his internal economy, through the nine long hours that separate breakfast from dinner. The period of unsophisticated innocence is, however, but short. By the light of a very little

knowledge of life in Paris, a lad soon acquires a notion of the awful distance between a supernumerary and a copying clerk; a distance which neither Archimedes, nor Newton, nor Pascal, nor Leibnitz, nor Kepler, nor Laplace, nor any other mathematician can compute. It is the difference between zero and the unit, between a problematical bonus and a regularly paid salary. The supernumerary accordingly is pretty quick to see the impossibilities of the career; he hears the talk of the clerks; they explain to him how So-and-so was promoted over their heads. By and by he discovers the intrigues of government offices; he finds out how his superiors were promoted, and the extraordinary circumstances that led to their success. One, for instance, married a young lady with a past; another took to wife the natural daughter of a minister; yet another took a heavy responsibility upon his shoulders; while a fourth, an extremely able man, imperiled his health with working like a galley-slave; but this last employé had the perseverance of a mole, and not every man feels himself capable of performing such feats. Everything is known in the office. Sometimes an incompetent man has a wife with plenty of brains; she brought him thus far; it was she who secured his nomination as a deputy; and though he has no capacity for work, he can intrigue in a small way in the Chamber. So-and-so has an intimate friend in a statesman's wife. Such-an-one is in league with a formidable journalist.

Then the supernumerary is disgusted and hands in his resignation. Three-fourths of the supernumeraries leave before they secure permanent berths. Those that remain are either dogged young men or simpletons that say to themselves, "I have been here for three years, I shall get a berth if I stay on long enough!" or those that feel conscious of a vocation. Clearly the supernumerary is, in the administration, pretty much what the novice is in religious orders. He is passing through his probation, and the trial is severe. In the course of it the State discovers the men that can bear hunger and thirst and want without giving way under the

strain; men whom drudgery does not disgust; the temperament that will accept the horrible life, the disease, if you prefer it, of a Government office. The supernumerary system from this point of view, so far from being a scandalous attempt on the part of the Government to get work done for nothing, might fairly be regarded as a beneficent institution.

The young fellow with whom Rabourdin was speaking was a poor supernumerary, by name Sébastien de la Roche. He had walked on tiptoe from the Rue du Roi Doré, in the Marais, but there was not the slightest speck of mud on his clothes. He spoke of his "mamma," and dared not lift his eyes to look at Mme. Rabourdin. Her house seemed to him to be a second Louvre. His poor mother had given him a five-franc piece in case it should be absolutely necessary to play; admonishing him, at the same time, to take nothing, to stand the whole time, and to be very careful not to upset a lamp or any of the pretty trifles on the whatnots. He was dressed entirely in black; his gloves had been cleaned with india-rubber, and he exhibited them as little as possible. His fair complexion and bright hazel eyes, with gleams of gold in them, suited well with his thick red-brown hair. Now and again the poor boy would steal a glance at Mme. Rabourdin. "What a beautiful woman!" he said to himself; and when he went home that night, he thought of the fairy till sleep closed his eyes.

Rabourdin saw that Sébastien had the making of a good clerk in him; and as he took his position of supernumerary seriously, the chief clerk was very much interested in the poor boy. And not only so, he had made a pretty correct guess at the poverty in the home of a poor widow with a pension of seven hundred francs; Sébastien had not long left school, his education must necessarily have eaten into her savings. So Rabourdin had been quite like a father to the supernumerary; he had often gone out of his way at the board to get a bonus for him; sometimes, indeed, he had paid the money out of his own pocket when the argument had grown too warm with the distributors of favor.

Then he heaped work upon Sébastien; he was training him; he made him fill du Bruel's place; and du Bruel, a playwright known to the dramatic world and the public by the pseudonym of de Cursy, paid Sébastien a hundred crowns out of his salary. Mme. de la Roche and her son regarded Rabourdin as a great man, a guardian angel and a tyrant blended in one; all their hopes depended on him. Sébastien always looked forward to the time when he should be an established clerk. Ah! it is a great day for the supernumerary when he signs his receipt for his salary for the first time. Many a time he has fingered the money for the first month, and the whole of it is not paid over to the mother. Venus smiles upon these first payments from the ministerial cash-box. This hope could only be realized for Sébastien by M. Rabourdin, his only protector; and accordingly, the lad's devotion to his chief was unbounded. Twice a month he dined in the Rue Duphot; but only with the family, and Rabourdin always brought him home. Madame never gave him an invitation except to balls, when dancing young men were wanted. At the sight of the awful des Lupeaulx his heart beat fast. One of the Minister's carriages used to come for des Lupeaulx at half-past four, just as he himself was opening his umbrella under the archway before setting off for the Marais. His fate depended upon the secretary-general; one word from the man in the doorway could give him a berth and a salary of twelve hundred francs. (Twelve hundred francs! It was the height of his ambition; he and his mother could live in comfort on such a stipend.) And yet, the secretary-general did not know him. Des Lupeaulx was scarcely aware there was such a person as Sébastien de la Roche. If la Billardière's son, a well-to-do supernumerary in Baudoyer's office, chanced to be under the archway at the same time, des Lupeaulx never failed to give him a friendly nod; but then M. Benjamin de la Billardière was the son of a minister's cousin.

At this particular moment Rabourdin was giving poor little Sébastien a scolding. Sébastien was the only person wholly

in the secret of Rabourdin's vast labors; Sébastien had copied and recopied the famous memorial on a hundred and fifty sheets of foolscap, to say nothing of tabulated statistics in support of the argument, abstracts on loose leaves, whole columns of bracketed calculations, headings in capital letters, and sub-headings in round hand. The mechanical part that he played in a great design had kindled enthusiasm in the lad of twenty, he would copy out a whole table again after a single erasure; he took a pride in the handwriting that counted for something in so great an enterprise.

Sébastien had been so thoughtless as to take the most dangerous rough draft of all to the office in order to finish the fair copy. This was a list of all the men in the head offices in Paris, with notes of their prospects, their present circumstances, and private occupations after hours.

Most civil servants in Paris eke out their salaries by some supplementary method of gaining a livelihood; unless, like Rabourdin, they possess patriotic ambition or mental superiority. Like M. Saillard, they become sleeping partners in a business, and go through the books at night. A good many clerks, again, marry seamstresses, or manageresses of lottery offices, or their wives keep tobacconists' shops or reading-rooms. Some, like Mme. Colleville's husband (Mme. Colleville, it may be remembered, was Célestine's rival), have a place in a theatre orchestra. Yet others, like du Bruel, for instance, write plays, comic operas, and melodramas, or take to stage-management. Witness Messrs. Sewrin, Pixérécourt, Planard, and others as instances in point. Pigault-Lebrun, Piis, and Duvicquet held posts in the civil service in their time; and M. Scribe's first publisher was a Treasury clerk.

Rabourdin's inventory contained other details. It was an inquiry into the personal characteristics of individuals. Some statement of their mental and physical capacities must of necessity be included in the survey if the Government was to recognize those who combined intelligence and aptitude for work with good health, for these are three indispensable qualifications in men who must bear the burden of public

business and do everything well and quickly. The inventory was a great piece of work; it was the outcome of ten years of labor, and a long experience of men and affairs acquired in the course of intimacies with the heads of other departments; but still it would savor somewhat of espionage, if it fell into the hands of those who did not understand the drift of it. If other eyes saw a single sheet, M. Rabourdin was ruined. Sébastien's admiration for his chief was unbounded, and he knew nothing as yet of the petty spite of bureaucracy. He had had the disadvantages of simplicity as well as its charm. So, although he had just been scolded for taking the sheet to his office, he had the courage to make a full confession. The rough draft and the fair copy were at the office at that moment; he had put them away in a case where no one could possibly find them. But as he saw the gravity of his mistake, the tears came into his eyes.

"Come, come, sir," Rabourdin added good-naturedly, "let us have no more imprudence; but do not distress yourself. Go down to the office very early to-morrow morning. Here is the key of a box in my cylinder desk; it has a letter lock; open it with the word *ciel,* and put the rough draft and the copy safely away."

This piece of confidence dried the lad's tears. His chief tried to induce him to take tea and cake.

"Mamma told me not to take tea because of my digestion," said Sébastien.

"Very well, my dear boy, here are some sandwiches and cream; come and sit beside me," said the awe-inspiring Mme. Rabourdin, ostentatiously gracious. She made Sébastien sit by her side at the table; and the light touch of the goddess' dress as it brushed his coat brought the poor boy's heart into his mouth. But at this moment the fair lady saw des Lupeaulx, and instead of waiting till he came to her, she went smiling towards him.

"Why do you stay there as if you were sulking with us?" she asked.

"I was not sulking," he replied. "But when I came to

bring you a bit of good news, I could not help thinking to myself that you would be more cruel now than ever. I foresaw that six months hence I should be almost a stranger to you. No; we cannot dupe each other—you have too much intelligence, and I on my side have had too much experience—I have been taken in too often, if you like it better. Your end is attained; it has cost you nothing but smiles and a few gracious words——"

"Dupe each other!" she repeated, apparently half offended; "what do you mean?"

"Yes. M. de la Billardière is worse again to-day; and from what the Minister said to me, your husband is certain to be head of the division."

He gave her the history of his "scene" with the Minister (for so he was pleased to call it), of the Countess' jealousy, and what she had said with regard to the invitation.

"Monsieur des Lupeaulx," the lady returned with dignity, "permit me to point out to you that my husband is the most capable chief clerk; that he stands first in seniority; that old la Billardière's appointment over his head made a sensation all through the service; that he has done the work of the head of the division for the past twelve months; and that we have neither competitor nor rival."

"That is true."

"Well," she continued, with a smile that displayed the prettiest teeth in the world, "can my friendship for you be spotted with any thought of self-interest? Can you think me capable of it?"

Des Lupeaulx signified his admiring incredulity.

"Ah!" cried she, "a woman's heart will always be a secret for the cleverest of you men. Yes, I have seen your visits here with the greatest pleasure, and there was a thought of self-interest at the back of the pleasure."

"Oh!"

"You have an unbounded future before you," she continued, lowering her voice for his ear; "you will be a deputy and a minister some day!" (How pleasant it is to an am-

bitious man to have such words as these murmured in his ear by a pretty woman with a charming voice!) "Ah! I know you better than you know yourself! Rabourdin will be immensely useful to you in your career; he will do the work while you are at the Chamber. And while you are dreaming of taking office, I want Rabourdin to be a state-councillor and a director-general. Here were two men who might be very useful to one another, while their interests could never clash, so I took it into my head to bring them together. That is a woman's part, is it not? You will both get on faster as friends, and it is time that you both should sail ahead. I have burned my boats," she added, smiling at him. "You are not as frank with me as I am with you."

"You will not listen to me," he returned in a melancholy tone, in spite of the satisfaction that her words gave him in the depths of his heart. "What good will your promises of promotion do me if you dismiss me here?"

She turned on him with a Parisienne's quickness.

"Before I listen to you, we must be in a position to understand each other," she said. And she left the elderly coxcomb and went to talk to Mme. de Chessel, a provincial countess, who made as though she meant to go.

"She is no ordinary woman!" thought des Lupeaulx. "I am not myself when I am with her."

And it is a fact that this reprobate who had kept an opera-dancer six years ago, and since then, thanks to his position, had made a seraglio of pretty women for himself among the wives of the employés, and lived in the world of actresses and journalists,—this jaded man of forty, I repeat, was charming with Célestine all that evening, and the very last to leave her salon.

"At last!" thought Mme. Rabourdin, as she went to bed. "At last we shall have the place. Twelve thousand francs a year, besides extras and the rent of the farm at Grajeux; twenty-five thousand francs altogether. It is not comfort; but still it is not poverty."

Célestine thought of her debts till she fell asleep. They

could be paid off in three years by putting aside six thousand francs a year. She was far from imagining, as she took Rabourdin's promotion for granted, that somewhere in the Marais a little shrewish, self-seeking, bigoted bourgeoise that had never set foot in a salon, a woman without influence or connections, was thinking of carrying the place by storm. And if Mme. Rabourdin could have seen Mme. Baudoyer, she would have despised her antagonist; she did not know the power of pettiness, the penetrating force of the grub that brings down the elm-tree by tracing a ring under the bark.

If it were possible in literature to make use of the microscope of a Leuwenhoek, a Malpighi, or a Raspail, as Hoffmann of Berlin attempted to do; if, furthermore, you could magnify and draw the teredo that brought Holland within a finger's breadth of extinction by gnawing through the dykes, perhaps you might see something within a little resembling the countenances of Messieurs Gigonnet, Mitral, Baudoyer, Saillard, Gaudron, Falleix, Transon, Godard and Company. These human teredos, at any rate, showed what they could do in the thirtieth year of this nineteenth century. And now is the time for displaying the official teredo, as he burrows in the public offices where most of the scenes in this history will take place.

At Paris all public offices are alike. No matter to what department you may betake yourself to ask for the redress of a grievance, or for the smallest favor, you will find the same gloomy corridors, the same dimly-lighted backways, the same rows of doors each with an enigmatical inscription, and an oval, glazed aperture like an eye; and if you look through those windows, you may see fantastic scenes worthy of Callot. When you discover the object of your search, you pass first of all through an outer room, where the office messenger sits, into a second, the general office; the senior clerk's sanctum lies to the right or left at the further end of it, and either beyond, or up above, you find the room appropriated to the use of the chief clerk himself. As for the immense personage

styled the head of the division under the Empire, the director under the Restoration, and the head of the division once more in our day, he is housed either up above or down below his two or three suites of offices; but occasionally his room lies beyond that of one of the chief clerks. As a rule it is remarkable for its spaciousness, an advantage not a little prized in these curious honeycomb cells of the big hive known as a government department, or a director-general's department, if there can be said to be such a thing as a director-general.

At the present day almost every department has absorbed all the lesser administrations which used to be separate. By this concentration the directors-general have been shorn of all their splendor in the shape of hôtels, servants, spacious rooms, and little courtyards. Who would recognize the Commissioner of Woods and Forests, or the Comptroller of Excise, in a man that comes to the Treasury on foot and climbs the stairs to a second floor? Once these dignitaries were councillors, or ministers, or peers of France, they were housed in a splendid hôtel in the Rue Sainte-Avoye or the Rue-Saint-Augustin. Messieurs Pasquier and Molé, among others, were content with a comptroller-general's post after they had been in office, thus illustrating the remark made by the Duc d'Antin to Louis XIV., "Sire, when Jesus Christ died on a Friday, He was sure that on Sunday He should rise from the dead." If the comptroller-general's sphere of activities had increased in extent when his splendor was curtailed, perhaps no great harm would have been done; but nowadays it is with great difficulty that this personage becomes a Master of Requests with a paltry twenty thousand francs a year. He is suffered to retain a symbol of his vanished power in the shape of an usher in small clothes, silk stockings, and a cut-away coat, if, indeed, the usher has not latterly been reformed out of existence.

The staff of an office consists, in administrative style, of a messenger, a number of supernumeraries who work for nothing for so many years, and the established clerks; to wit, the writers or copying-clerks, the draughting-clerks, and first or

senior clerks, under a chief and his assistant the *sous-chef*. A *division* usually comprises two or three such offices, and sometimes more. The names of the functionaries vary with the different departments; in some the senior clerk may be replaced by a head book-keeper or an auditor.

The floor of the outer room, inhabited by the office messenger, is tiled like the passage, the walls are covered with a cheap paper; the furniture consists of a stove, a big black table, an inkstand and pens, with sundry bare benches for the accommodation of the public that dances attendance there (the office messenger sits in a comfortable armchair, and rests his feet on a hassock). Sometimes, in addition, there is a water-cistern and a tap. The general office is a large and more or less well-lighted apartment. Wooden floors are very rare; parquetry and open fireplaces, like mahogany cupboards, tables, and desks, red and green leather-covered chairs, silken curtains, and other departmental luxuries are appropriated to the use of chief clerks and heads of divisions. The general office is supplied with a stove, the pipe enters the chimney-opening, if there happens to be a flue. The wall-paper is usually plain green or brown. The tables are of black wood.

A clerk's industry may be pretty accurately gauged by his manner of installing himself. A chilly subject will have a kind of wooden foot-rest; the man of bilious-sanguine temperament is content with a straw mat; the lymphatic man that lives in fear of draughts, open doors, or other causes of a fall in the temperature, will intrench himself behind a little screen of pasteboard cases. There is a cupboard somewhere in which office-coats, over-sleeves, eye-shades, caps, fezs, and other gear of the craft are kept. The chimney-piece is almost always loaded with water-bottles and glasses and the remains of luncheons; a lamp may be found in some dark corners. The door of the assistant's sanctum usually stands ajar, so that that gentleman may keep an eye on the general office, prevent too much talk, and come out to confer with the clerks in great emergencies.

You can tell the quality of the official at a pinch from

the furniture of the room. The curtains vary, some are of white or colored stuff, some are cotton, some silk; the chairs are of cherry-wood or mahogany, and straw-seated, or upholstered or cushioned with leather; the wall-papers are more or less clean. But to whatever department this kind of public property may chance to belong, nothing can look more strange, when removed from its surroundings, than a collection of furniture that has seen so many changes of government and come through so much rough treatment. Of all removals in Paris, the migration of a public office is the most grotesque to witness. The genius of Hoffmann, that high priest of the impossible, could not invent anything more whimsical. Some unaccountable change is wrought in the hand-carts. The yawning pasteboard cases leave a track of dust along the street; the tables appear with their castors in the air. There is something dismaying in the aspect of the ramshackle armchairs and inconceivably odd gear with which the administration of France is carried on. In some ways it reminds you of a turnout of the properties of a theatre, in others of the stock-in-trade of an acrobat. Even so, upon some obelisk you may behold traces of intelligent purpose in the shadowy lettering which troubles your imagination, after the wont of most things of which you cannot discern the end. And lastly, these utensils from the administrative kitchen are all so old, so battered, so faded, that the dirtiest array of pots and pans would be an infinitely more pleasing spectacle.

If foreign and provincial readers would form an accurate idea of the inner life of a public office at Paris, it may, perhaps, suffice to describe M. de la Billardière's division, for its chief characteristics are common, no doubt, to all European administrations.

First and foremost, picture, to suit your fancy, the personage thus set forth in large type in the *Annuaire*:—

"Head of the Division: M. le Baron Flamet de la Billardière (Athanase Jean François Michel), formerly Grand Provost of the Department of the Corrèze; Gentleman in Or-

dinary of the Chamber; Master of Requests Extraordinary, President of the Electoral College of the Department of the Dordogne, officer of the Legion of Honor; Chevalier of St. Louis, and of the foreign orders of Christ, of Isabella, of St. Vladimir, etc., etc.; Member of the Académie of Gers and of many other learned Societies, Vice-President of the Société des Bonnes-Lettres; Member of the Association of St. Joseph, and of the Prisoners' Aid Society; one of the Mayors of Paris, and so forth, and so forth."

The man that took up so much space in print was occupying at that moment some five feet and a half by two feet six inches on the bed whereon he lay, his head adorned with a cotton nightcap tied with flame-colored ribbons; with Desplein, the King's surgeon, and young Dr. Bianchon to visit him, and two elderly kinswomen to mount guard over him on either side; a host of phials, bandages, syringes, and other instruments of death encompassing him about, and the curé of Saint-Roch ever on the watch to insinuate a word or two as to the salvation of his soul.

Every morning his son Benjamin de la Billardière would meet the two doctors with the formula, "Do you think that I shall be so fortunate as to keep my father?" It was only that very day that, by a slip of the tongue, he had brought out the word "unfortunate" instead.

La Billardière's division was situated below the latitude of the attics by seventy-one degrees of longitude, measured by the steps of the staircase, in the departmental ocean of a great and imposing pile of buildings. It lay on the north-east side of a courtyard, a space formerly taken up by the stables, and now occupied by Clergeot's division. The two distinct sets of offices were divided by the breadth of the stair-head. All the doors were labeled along a spacious corridor illuminated by borrowed lights. The offices and ante-chambers belonging to the two chief clerks, Messrs. Rabourdin and Baudoyer, were below on the second floor; and M. de la Billardière's ante-chamber, sitting-room, and two private offices lay immediately beyond M. Rabourdin's rooms.

The first floor was divided in two by an entresol, and here M. Ernest de la Brière was established. M. Ernest de la Brière was an occult power which shall be described in a few words, for he certainly deserves a parenthetic mention. So long as the Minister was in office, this young man was his private secretary. For which reason his room communicated by a secret door with His Excellency's sanctum. His Excellency, be it said, had two private cabinets; one of these was in keeping with the state apartments in which he received visitors, and here he conferred with great personages in the absence of his secretary; the other was the study in which he retired to work with his private secretary and without witnesses. Now a private secretary is to a single minister what des Lupeaulx was to a whole government. Between young la Brière and des Lupeaulx there was just the difference that separates the aide de camp from the chief of the staff. The private secretary is a minister's apprentice; he takes himself off and reappears with his patron. If the minister is still in favor, or if he has hopes when he goes out of office, he takes his secretary with him, only to bring him back again. If it is otherwise, he puts his *protégé* out to grass in some administrative pasture—in the Audit Department, for example, that hostelry where secretaries wait till the storm passes over. A young gentleman in this position is not precisely a statesman; he is a man of politics; sometimes, too, he represents the politics of a man. When you come to think of the quantity of letters which he must open and read, to say nothing of his other occupations, is it not evident that such a commodity would be extremely expensive under an absolute monarchy? At Paris a victim of this sort can be had for an annual sum varying from ten to twenty thousand francs; but the young man has the benefit of the minister's carriages, boxes at the theatre, and invitations. The Emperor of Russia would be very glad to give fifty thousand francs a year for such a marvelously groomed and carefully curled Constitutional poodle; it is such a good guard; such an amiable, sweet-tempered, docile animal; so fond and—faithful! But, alas! the private

secretary is not to be grown, found, discovered, or developed anywhere save in the hotbeds of a representative government. Under an absolute monarch you can only have courtiers and servitors; whereas with a Charter, free men will serve you, and flatter you, and fawn upon you. Wherefore ministers in France are more fortunate than women or crowned kings; they have somebody to understand them. Perhaps, at the same time, private secretaries are as much to be pitied as women or white paper—they must take all that is put upon them. Like a virtuous wife, a private secretary is bound to display his talents in private only, and for his minister. If he exhibits his abilities in public, he is ruined. Therefore a private secretary is a friend given by the Government. But to return to our Government offices.

Three office-messengers lived in harmony in la Billardière's division, to wit, one messenger for the two offices; another shared by the two chief clerks; and a third for the head of the division exclusively. All three were clothed and warmed at the public expense; all three wore the same well-known livery—royal blue with a scarlet piping for an undress uniform, and a wide red-white-and-blue galoon for state occasions. La Billardière's man had been put into an usher's uniform. The secretary-general, willing to flatter the self-love of a minister's cousin, permitted an encroachment which reflected glory upon the administration. These three messengers were veritable pillars of the department, and experts in bureaucratic customs. They wanted for nothing; they were well warmed and clothed at the expense of the State; and well-to-do, because they were frugal. They probed every man in the department to the quick; for the one interest in their lives consisted in watching the clerks and studying their hobbies. Wherefore they knew exactly how far it was safe to go in the matter of loans, performing their commissions with the utmost discretion, undertaking errands to the pawnbroker, buying pawn-tickets, lending money without interest. No one, however, borrowed any sum however trifling without giving a gratuity; and as the loans were usually very small, the practice was equivalent to the payment of a usurious interest.

The three masterless servants had a salary of nine hundred francs; New Year's tips and perquisites raised the income to twelve hundred; and they were in a position to make almost as much again out of the clerks; for all the breakfasts of those who breakfasted passed through their hands. In some Government offices the doorkeeper actually provides the breakfasts. The doorkeeper's place in the finance department had been worth something like four thousand francs to fat old Thuillier senior, whose son was now a clerk in la Billardière's division. Sometimes attendants feel a five-franc piece slipped into the palm of their right hands if a petitioner is in a hurry, an occurrence which they take with rare impassibility. The seniors only wear their uniform when on duty, and go out in plain clothes.

The messenger of the general office was the best off, for he exploited the staff of clerks. He was a thick-set corpulent man of sixty, with bristling white hair, an apoplectic neck, a common pimpled countenance, gray eyes, and a mouth like a stove-door; here you have a sketch of Antoine, the oldest messenger in the department. Antoine had sent for his nephews from Échelles in Savoy, and found places for them; Laurent with the chief clerks, Gabriel with the head of the division. The two Savoyards were dressed like their uncle, in broadcloth. As to appearance, they were simply ordinary servants in uniform. At night they took checks at a subsidized theatre (la Billardière had obtained the places for them). Both had married skilled lace-cleaners, who also undertook fine darning and repairs of cashmere shawls As the uncle was a bachelor, the whole family lived together, and lived very much more comfortably than most chief clerks. Gabriel and Laurent, having only been a matter of ten years in the service, had not yet learned to look down upon the government costume; they went abroad in uniform, proud as dramatic authors after a success from a pecuniary point of view. The uncle, whom they took for a very acute person, and served with blind devotion, gradually initiated them into the mysteries of the craft.

The three had just opened the offices. Between seven and eight they used to sweep out the offices, read the newspapers, or discuss the politics of the division with other porters, after the manner of their kind, with due exchange of information. Modern domestic servants are perfectly acquainted with the affairs of the family; and the servants of the department, like spiders in the middle of a web, could feel the slightest disturbance in any part of it.

It was a Thursday morning, the day after the Minister's reception and Mme. Rabourdin's At Home. Uncle Antoine, with the assistance of his nephews, was shaving in the antechamber on the second floor, when the arrival of one of the clerks took them all by surprise.

"That is M. Dutocq," remarked Antoine; "I know him by the way he comes sneaking in. He always goes about as if he were skating, he does. He drops down upon you before you can tell which way he came. Yesterday, he was the last to leave the office, a thing that hasn't happened three times since he has been here."

A man of thirty-eight, with a long visage of a bilious hue, and close-cropped woolly gray hair; a low forehead, thick eyebrows that met in the middle, a crooked nose, compressed lips, light green eyes that never looked you in the face; a tall figure, one shoulder slightly larger than the other; a brown coat, black waistcoat, a silk handkerchief round the throat, buff trousers, black woolen stockings, and shoes with mud-bedraggled laces,—here you have M. Dutocq, senior clerk in Rabourdin's office. Dutocq was incompetent and indolent. He detested his chief. Nothing could be more natural. Rabourdin had no weakness to flatter, no vice to which Dutocq could pander. The chief was far too high-minded to injure a subordinate; but, at the same time, he was too clear-sighted to be duped by appearances. Dutocq only remained on sufferance, through Rabourdin's generosity; there was no prospect of advancement unless there was a change of chief. Dutocq was well aware that he himself was not fit to fill a higher post, but he knew enough of Government offices to

understand that incompetence does not prevent a man from affixing his signature to the work of others. He would get out of the difficulty by finding a Rabourdin among the draughting clerks, for la Billardière's promotion had been a striking and disastrous object lesson to the department. Spite when combined with self-interest is a very fair substitute for intelligence; and Dutocq was very spiteful, and very much bent on his own interests. Wherefore he had set himself to consolidate his position by taking the office of spy upon himself. After 1816 he became a bigot of the deepest dye; he foresaw that persons then indiscriminately labeled "Jesuits," by fools that knew no better, would shortly be in favor. He belonged to the Congrégation, though he was not admitted to its inner circles. He went from office to office, sounded consciences with coarse jokes, and returned to paraphrase his "reports" for des Lupeaulx's benefit. Des Lupeaulx was kept informed in this way of everything that went on; and, indeed, the secretary-general's profound knowledge of the ins and outs of affairs often astonished the Minister. Dutocq in good earnest was the Bonneau of a political Bonneau; he was intriguing for the honor of taking des Lupeaulx's secret messages, and des Lupeaulx tolerated the unclean creature, thinking that he might sometime make him useful, were it only to get himself or some great person out of a scrape by some shameful marriage. On some such good fortune indeed Dutocq was reckoning, for he remained a bachelor. The pair understood one another. Dutocq had succeeded M. Poiret senior, who retired to a boarding-house, and was put on a pension in 1814, at which time there had been a grand general reform of the staff. Dutocq lived on a fifth floor, in a house with a passage entry in the Rue Saint Louis Saint Honoré. As an enthusiastic amateur of old prints, it was his ambition to possess complete collections of the works of Rembrandt, Charlet, Sylvestre, Audran, Callot, Albrecht Dürer, and others; and, like most collectors who live by themselves, he aspired to pick these things up cheaply. Dutocq took his meals in a boarding-house in the Rue de Beaune,

and spent his evenings at the Palais Royal. Sometimes he went to the play, thanks to du Bruel, who would give him an author's ticket every week. A word as to du Bruel.

Du Bruel came to the office simply for the sake of drawing his salary and believing and saying that he was the chief clerk's assistant; but Sébastien did his work, as has been seen, and received a very inadequate return for it. Du Bruel did the minor theatres for a ministerial paper, for which he also wrote articles to order. His position was known, defined, and unassailable. Nor did he fail in any of the little diplomatic shifts that gain a man the goodwill of his fellow creatures. He always offered Mme. Rabourdin a box on a first night, for instance, and called for her and took her back in a carriage, an attention of which she was very sensible. Rabourdin was very easy with his subordinates, very little given to tormenting them; so he allowed du Bruel to attend rehearsals and to come and go and work at his vaudevilles pretty much as he pleased. M. le Duc de Chaulieu was aware that du Bruel was writing a novel, and meant to dedicate the book to him. Du Bruel accordingly dressed as carelessly as a vaudevilliste; in the morning he appeared in footed trousers and thin-soled shoes, a superannuated waistcoat, a greenish black greatcoat and a black cravat, but at night he was fashionably arrayed, for he aimed at being a gentleman.

Du Bruel lived, for sufficient reasons, with Florine, the actress for whom he wrote parts; and Florine at that time lodged with Tullia, a dancer more remarkable for beauty than for talent. This arrangement permitted him to see a good deal of the Duc de Rhétoré, oldest son of the Duc de Chaulieu, a favorite with the King. The Duc de Chaulieu had obtained the Cross of the Legion of Honor for du Bruel after his eleventh play on a topic of the hour. Du Bruel—or de Cursy, if you prefer it—was at work at the moment on a drama in five acts for the Français. Sébastien had a strong liking for the assistant, who sometimes gave him an order for the pit. Du Bruel used to point out any doubtful passages beforehand, and Sébastien, with the sincerity of youth, would

applaud with all his might; he regarded du Bruel as a great man of letters. Once it happened that a vaudeville written, as usual, with two collaborators had been hissed in several places.

"The public find out the parts written in collaboration," du Bruel remarked next day to Sébastien.

"Why don't you write it all yourself?" Sébastien answered in the simplicity of his heart.

There were excellent reasons why du Bruel should not write the whole himself. He was the third part of a dramatic author. Few people are aware that a dramatic author is a composite being. First, there is the Man of Ideas; it is his duty to find the subject and construct the framework or scenario of the vaudeville; the Plodder works out the dialogue, while the Man of Details sets the couplets to music, arranges the choruses and the accompaniments, and grafts the songs into the plot. The same personage also looks after the practical aspects of the play; he sees after the drawing up of the placards, and never leaves the manager until he has definitely secured the representation of a piece written by the three partners for the following day.

Du Bruel, a born plodder, was in the habit of reading new books at the office, and picking out the clever bits; he made a note of these, and embroidered his dialogues with them. Cursy (that was his *nom de guerre*) was held in esteem by his collaborators on account of his impeccable accuracy; the Man of Ideas could feel sure that Cursy would comprehend him, and might fold his arms. His popularity among the clerks was sufficient to bring them out in a body to applaud his pieces, for he had the reputation of a "good fellow," and he deserved it. He was free-handed; it was never very difficult to screw a bowl of punch or ices out of him, and he would lend fifty francs and never ask for the money. Du Bruel was a man of regular habits; he had a house in the country at Aulnay, and found investments for his money. Besides his salary of four thousand five hundred francs, he had a pension of twelve hundred from the civil list, and eight hundred

francs out of the hundred thousand crowns voted by the Chamber for the encouragement of the arts. Add to these various sources of income some nine thousand francs brought in by the "thirds," "fourths," and "halves" of vaudevilles at three different theatres, and you will understand at once that du Bruel was broad, rotund, and fat, and looked like a man of substance. As to his morals, he was Tullia's lover; and, as usual, believed that he was preferred to her protector, the brilliant Duc de Rhétoré.

Dutocq beheld, not without dismay, the *liaison* (as he called it) between des Lupeaulx and Mme. Rabourdin. His smothered fury was increased. What was more, his prying eyes could not fail to detect that Rabourdin was throwing himself into some great work outside his official duties, and he despaired of finding out anything about it, whereas little Sébastien was either wholly or partly in the secret. Dutocq had tried successfully to make an ally of M. Godard, Baudoyer's assistant, du Bruel's colleague; the high esteem in which Dutocq held Baudoyer had led to an acquaintance. Not that Dutocq was sincere; but by crying up Baudoyer and saying nothing of Rabourdin, he satisfied his spleen, after the fashion of petty minds.

Joseph Godard was Mitral's cousin by the mother's side. His relationship to Baudoyer, therefore, was distant enough, but he had founded hopes upon it; he meant to marry Mlle. Baudoyer, and consequently Isidore was a brilliant genius in his eyes. He professed a high respect for Elizabeth and Mme. Saillard, failing to perceive that Mme. Baudoyer was "simmering" Falleix for her daughter; and he used to bring little presents for Mlle. Baudoyer—artificial flowers, sugar-plums on New Year's Day, and pretty boxes on her birthday. Godard was a man of six-and-twenty, a dull plodder, well-conducted as a young lady, humdrum and apathetic. Cafés, cigars, and horse exercise he held in abhorrence; he went to bed regularly at ten, and rose at seven. His various social talents brought him into high favor with the Saillards and Baudoyers; he could play dance music on the flageolet; and in

the National Guard he took a fife in the band to avoid night-duty. Natural history was Godard's special hobby. He collected minerals and shells; he could stuff birds; his rooms were warehouses of curiosities picked up for small sums; he had landscape-stones, models of palaces in cork, various petrified objects from the springs of Saint Allyre at Clermont (Auvergne), and the like. Godard used to buy up scent-bottles to hold his specimens of baryta, his sulphates, salts, magnesia, coral, and the like. He kept collections of butterflies in frames; he covered the walls with dried fish-skins and Chinese umbrellas.

Godard lived with his sister, a flower-maker in the Rue de Richelieu. But though this model young man was much admired by mothers of daughters, it is a fact that he was held in much contempt by his sister's work-girls, and more particularly by the young lady at the desk, who had long hoped to entangle him. He was thin and slim, and of average height; there were dark circles about his eyes; his beard was scanty; his breath was bad (according to Bixiou). Joseph Godard took little pains with himself; his clothes did not fit him, his trousers were large and baggy; he wore white stockings all the year round, a narrow-rimmed hat, and laced shoes. At the office he sat in a cane chair with the seat broken through, and a round leather cushion on the top of it. He complained a good deal of indigestion. His principal failing was a tendency to propose picnics and Sunday excursions in the summer to Montmorency, or a walk to a dairy on the Boulevard Mont Parnasse.

After the acquaintance between Dutocq and Godard had lasted for some six months, Dutocq began to go now and again to Mlle. Godard's, hoping to do a piece of business in the house, or to discover some feminine treasure.

And so it came to pass that in Dutocq and Godard Baudoyer had two men to sing his praises in the office. M. Saillard was incapable of discovering Dutocq's real character; sometimes he would drop in to speak to him at his desk. Young la Billardière, one of Baudoyer's supernumeraries, be-

longed to this set. Cleverer men laughed not a little at the alliance of Godard, Dutocq, and Baudoyer. Bixiou dubbed it *la Trinité sans Esprit,* and christened little la Billardière "the Paschal Lamb."

"You are up early," said Antoine, with a laugh, as Dutocq came in.

"And as for you, Antoine," returned Dutocq, "it is plain that the newspapers sometimes come before you give them out to us."

"It happens so to-day," said Antoine, not a whit disconcerted; "they never come in at the same time for two days together."

The nephews looked furtively at one another, as if to say admiringly, "What a cool hand!"

"He brings me in two sous on his breakfasts," muttered Antoine as Dutocq shut the door, "but I would as soon be without it to have him out of the department."

"Ah! you are not the first to-day, M. Sébastien," he remarked, a quarter of an hour afterwards.

"Who ever can have come?" the poor boy asked, and his face turned white.

"M. Dutocq," said Laurent.

Virgin natures possess an unusual degree of that inexplicable power of second sight which perhaps depends upon an unjaded nervous system, upon the sensibility of an organization that may be called new. Sébastien had guessed that Dutocq hated the venerated Rabourdin. So Laurent had scarcely pronounced the name before an ugly presentiment flashed upon the supernumerary.

"I suspected as much," he exclaimed, and he was off like an arrow down the corridor.

"There will be a row in the offices," remarked Antoine, shaking his white head as he put on his uniform. "It is easy to see that M. le Baron is going to his last account. Yes, Mme. Gruget, his nurse, told me that he would not live the day out. What a stir there will be here, to be sure. Go and

see if the stoves are burning up, some of you. *Sabre de bois!* all of them will come tumbling in upon us in a minute."

"The poor little youngster was in a fine taking when he heard that that Jesuit of a M. Dutocq was in before him, and that's a fact," commented Laurent.

"Well, I for one have told him (for, after all, one can't do less than tell a good clerk the truth, and what I call a good clerk is a clerk like this youngster, that pays up his ten francs sharp on New Year's Day), I have told him, I say, 'The more you do, the more they will want you to do, and they will leave you where you are!' But it is no good. He will not listen to me. He kills himself with stopping till five o'clock, an hour after everybody else" (Antoine shrugged his shoulders). "All nonsense; that's not the way to get on! And here's proof of it—nothing has been said yet of taking on the poor boy as an established clerk, and an excellent one he would make. After two years too! It sets your back up, upon my word!"

"M. Rabourdin has a liking for M. Sébastien," said Laurent.

"But M. Rabourdin is not a minister," retorted Antoine. "It will be a hot day when he is a minister; the fowls will cut their teeth. He is much too—never mind what! When I think that I take round the muster-roll of salaries, to be receipted by humbugs that stop away and do what they please, while little la Roche is working himself to death, I wonder whether God gives a thought to Government offices. And as for these pets of M. le Maréchal and M. le Duc; what do they give you?—They *thank* you" (Antoine made a patronizing nod). "'Thanks, my dear Antoine.'—A pack of do-nothings; let them work, or they will bring on another Revolution! You should have seen whether they came it over us like this in M. Robert Lindet's time; for, such as you see me, I came to this shop under M. Robert Lindet. The clerks used to work when he was here! You ought to have seen those quill-drivers scratching away till midnight, all the stoves gone out, and nobody so much as noticing it; but for one thing, the guillo-

tine was there too; and no need to say, it was a very different thing from simply taking down their names as we do now when they come late."

"Daddy Antoine," began Gabriel, "since you are in a talking humor this morning, what do you make out that a clerk is?"

"A clerk!" Antoine returned gravely. "A clerk is a man that sits in an office and writes.—What am I saying? Where should we be without clerks? Just go and look after your stoves and never say a word against the clerks. The stove in the large room draws like fury, Gabriel; you must shut off some of the draught."

Antoine took up his position at the stairhead, so that he could see all the clerks as they came in under the arched gateway. He knew everybody in every office in the department, and used to watch their ways and notice the differences in their dress. And here, before entering upon the drama, it is necessary to give portraits in outline of the principal actors in la Billardière's division; for not merely will the reader make the acquaintance of the various types of the *genus* clerk, but he will find in them the justification of Rabourdin's observations, and likewise the title of this essentially Parisian Study.

And on this head, let there be no misapprehensions: from the point of view of poverty and eccentricity there are clerks and clerks, just as there are faggots and faggots. In the first place, you must distinguish between the clerk in Paris and his provincial brother. The provincial clerk is well off. He is spaciously housed; he has a garden; he is comfortable as a rule in his office. Sound wine is not dear; he does not dine off horse-steaks; he is acquainted with the luxury of dessert. People may not know precisely what he eats, but every one will tell you that he does not "eat up his salary." So far from running into debt, he positively saves on his income. If he is a bachelor, mothers of daughters greet him as he passes; if he is married, he and his wife go to balls at the receiver-general's, at the prefecture, at the sub-prefec-

ture. People take an interest in his character; he makes conquests; he has a reputation for intelligence; his loss would probably be felt; the whole town knows him, and takes an interest in his wife and family. He gives evening parties; he may become a deputy if he has private means, and his father-in-law is in easy circumstances. His wife is always under the minute and inquisitive spy system of a small town; if he is unfortunate in his married life, he knows it, whereas a clerk at Paris is not bound to hear of his misfortune. Lastly, the provincial clerk is "somebody," while the Parisian is almost "nobody."

The next comer was a draughting-clerk, Phellion by name, a respectable father of a family. He was in Rabourdin's office. His chief's influence had obtained education for each of his two boys at half-cost at the Collège Henri IV., a well-timed favor; for Phellion had a third child, a girl, who was being educated free of expense in a boarding-school where her mother gave music lessons, and her father taught history and geography of an evening. Phellion was a man of forty-five, and a sergeant-major in the National Guard. He was very ready to give sympathy; but he never had a fathing to spare. He lived, not very far from the Sourds-Muets, in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Jacques, on a floor of a house, with a garden attached. "His place," to use his own expression, only cost four hundred francs. The draughting-clerk was proud of his position, and rejoiced in his lot; he worked industriously for the Government, believed that he was serving his country, and boasted of his indifference to party politics; he looked at nothing but AUTHORITY. Sometimes, to his delight, M. Rabourdin would ask him to stay for half an hour to finish some piece of work. Then Phellion would go to the boarding-school in the Rue Notre Dame des Champs, where his wife taught music, and say to the Demoiselles la Grave with whom he dined:

"Affairs compelled me to stay late at the office, mesdemoiselles. When a man is in the service of the Government, he is not his own master."

Phellion had compiled various school-books in the form of question and answer for the use of ladies' schools. These "small but condensed treatises," as he called them, were on sale at the University bookseller's under the name of "Historical and Geographical Catechisms." He felt it incumbent upon him to present Mme. Rabourdin with each of these works as they came out, taking a copy printed on hand-made paper and bound in crimson morocco. On these occasions he appeared in the Rue Duphot in full dress: silk small clothes, silk stockings, shoes with gold buckles, and so forth. M. Phellion gave beer and patty soirées on Thursday evenings after the boarders had gone to bed. They played bouillotte, with five sous in the pool; and in spite of the slenderness of the stakes, it once fell out that M. Laudigeois, a registrar's clerk, lost ten francs in an evening by reckless gambling.

The walls of the sitting-room were covered with a green American paper with a red border, and adorned with portraits of the Royal family. The visitor might behold His Majesty the King, the Dauphiness, and Madame; with a pair of framed engravings, to wit, *Mazeppa,* after Horace Vernet, and *The Pauper's Funeral,* after Vigneron. This last-named work of art, according to Phellion, was "sublime in its conception. It ought to console the lower classes by reminding them that they had more devoted friends than men, friends whose affections go beyond the grave." From those words you can guess that Phellion was the sort of man to take his children to the Cimetière de l'Ouest on All Souls' Day, and point out the twenty square yards of earth (purchased "in perpetuity") where his father and his mother-in-law lay buried. "We shall come here some day," he used to say, to familiarize his offspring with the idea of death.

It was one of Phellion's great amusements to explore Paris. He had treated himself to a map. Antony, Arcueil, Bièvre, Fontenay-aux-Roses, and Aulnay, all of them famous as the abode of more than one great writer, he knew already by heart, and he hoped in time to know all the suburbs on the west side. His eldest son he destined for the service of the

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Phellion

Government; the second was to go to the École polytechnique. He often used to say to his eldest, "When you have the honor to be employed by the Government!" but, at the same time, he suspected the boy of a turn for the exact sciences, and strove to repress the tendency, holding in reserve the extreme course of leaving him to shift for himself if he persisted in his ways.

Phellion had never ventured to ask M. Rabourdin to dine with him, though he would have regarded such a day as one of the greatest in his life. He used to say that if he could leave one of his sons to walk in the footsteps of M. Rabourdin, he should die the happiest father in the world. He dinned the praises of the worthy and much-respected chief into the ears of the Demoiselles la Grave, till those ladies longed to see M. Rabourdin, as a lad might crave a glimpse of M. de Chateaubriand. They would have been very glad, they said, to be intrusted with the education of his "young lady." If the Minister's carriage chanced to come in or out, Phellion took off his hat very respectfully whether there was anybody in it or not, and said that it would be well for France if everybody held authority in sufficient honor to revere it even in its insignia. When Rabourdin sent for him "downstairs" to explain his work, Phellion summoned up all his intelligence, and listened to his chief's lightest word as a dilettante listens to an air at the Italiens. He sat silent in the office, his feet perched aloft on his wooden foot-rest; he never stirred from his place; he conscientiously gave his mind to his work. In administrative correspondence he expressed himself with solemnity; he took everything seriously; he emphasized the Minister's orders by translating them into pompous phraseology. Yet, great as he was upon propriety, a disastrous thing had happened once in his career—a disaster indeed. In spite of the minute care with which he drafted his letters, he once allowed a phrase thus conceived to escape him, "You will therefore repair to the closet with the necessary papers." The copying-clerks, delighted at a chance of a laugh at the expense of the harmless creature, went to consult Rabourdin

behind Phellion's back. Rabourdin, knowing his draughting-clerk's character, could not help smiling as he endorsed the margin with a note, "You will appear at the private office with the documents indicated." The alteration was shown to Phellion; he studied it, pondered, and weighed the difference between the expressions, and candidly admitted that it would have taken him a couple of hours to find the equivalents. "M. Rabourdin is a man of genius!" he cried. He always thought that his colleagues had shown a want of consideration for him by referring the matter so promptly to the chief; but he had too much respect for the established order of things not to admit that they had acted within their right, and so much the more so since he, Phellion, was absent at the time. Still, in their place, he himself would have waited—there was no pressing need for the circular. This affair cost him several nights' rest. If any one wished to make him angry, they had only to remind him of the accursed phrase by asking as he went out, "Have you the necessary papers?" At which question the worthy draughting-clerk would turn and give the clerks a withering glance. "It seems to me, gentlemen, that your remark is extremely unbecoming." One day, however, he waxed so wroth that Rabourdin was obliged to interfere, and the clerks were forbidden to allude to the affair.

M. Phellion looked rather like a meditative ram. His face was somewhat colorless, and marked with smallpox; his lips were thick and underhung, his eyes were pale blue, and in figure he was rather above average height. Neat in his person he was bound to be, as a master of history and geography in a ladies' school; he wore good linen, a pleated shirt-front, an open black kerseymere waistcoat that afforded glimpses of the braces which his daughter embroidered for him, a diamond pin, a black coat, and blue trousers. In winter he adopted a nut-brown box-coat with three capes, and it was his wont to carry a loaded cane—"a precaution rendered necessary by the extreme loneliness of some parts of the neighborhood." He had given up the habit of taking snuff, a reform which he was wont to cite as a striking instance of the com-

mand that a man may gain over himself. Having what he called a "fat chest," it was his wont to ascend staircases slowly for fear of contracting an asthma.

He saluted Antoine with dignity.

A copying-clerk, an odd contrast to this exemplary worthy, immediately followed. Vimeux was a young fellow of five-and-twenty, with a salary of fifteen hundred francs. He was well made and slim-waisted; his eyes, eyebrows, and beard were as black as jet; he had good teeth and sweetly pretty hands, while his moustache was so luxuriant and well cared for that its cultivation might have been his principal occupation in life. Vimeux's aptitude for his work was so great that he had always finished it long before anybody else.

"He is a gifted young man!" Phellion would exclaim, as he saw Vimeux cross his legs, at a loss to know what to do with the rest of his time. "And look!" he would say to du Bruel, "how exquisitely neat it is!"

Vimeux breakfasted off a roll of bread and a glass of water, dined at Katcomb's for twenty sous, and lived in furnished lodgings at twelve francs a month. Dress was his one joy and pleasure in life. He ruined himself with wonderful waistcoats, tight-fitting or semi-fitting trousers, thin boots, carefully-cut coats that outlined his figure, bewitching collars, fresh gloves, and hats. His hand was adorned by a signet-ring, which he wore outside his glove; he carried an elegant walking-cane, and did his best to look and behave like a wealthy young man. Toothpick in hand, he would repair to the main alley in the Tuileries Gardens, and stroll about, looking for all the world like a millionaire just arisen from table. He had studied the art of twirling a cane and ogling with an eye to business, *à l'américaine,* as Bixiou said; for Vimeux lived in the hope that some widow, Englishwoman or foreign lady might be smitten with his charms; he used to laugh to show his fine set of teeth; he went without socks to have his hair curled every day. Vimeux laid it down as a fixed principle that an eligible hunch-backed girl must have six thousand livres a year; he would take a woman of five-and-

forty with an income of eight thousand, or an English woman with a thousand crowns. Phellion took compassion on the young man. He was so much pleased with Vimeux's penmanship that he lectured him, and tried to persuade him to turn writing-master; it was, he said, a respectable profession which might ameliorate his existence and even render it agreeable. He promised him the school kept by the Demoiselles la Grave. But Vimeux's belief in his star was not to be shaken—it was too firmly fixed in his head. He continued, therefore, to exhibit himself like one of Chevet's sturgeons; albeit his luxuriant moustache had been displayed in vain for three years. Vimeux lowered his eyes every time that he passed Antoine; he owed the porter thirty francs for his breakfasts, and yet towards noon he always asked him to bring him a roll.

Rabourdin had tried several times to put a little sound sense into the young fellow's foolish head, but he gave up at last. Vimeux's father was a clerk to a justice of the peace in the department of the Nord. Adolphe Vimeux had given up dinners at Katcomb's lately, and lived entirely on bread. He was saving up to buy a pair of spurs and a riding-switch. In the office they jeered at his matrimonial calculations, calling him the Villiaume pigeon; but any scoff at this vacuous Amadis could only be attributed to the mocking spirit that creates the vaudeville, for Vimeux was a friendly creature, and nobody's enemy but his own. The great joke in both offices was to bet that he wore stays.

Vimeux began his career under Baudoyer, and intrigued to be transferred to Rabourdin, because Baudoyer was inexorable on the matter of "Englishmen," for so the clerks called duns. The "Englishmen's," day is the day on which the public is admitted; the creditors, being sure of finding their debtors, flock thither to worry them, asking when they will be paid, threatening to attach their salaries. Baudoyer the inexorable compelled his clerks to face it out. "It was their affair," he said, "not to get into debt"; and he regarded his severity as a thing necessary for the public welfare. Rabour-

din, on the other hand, stood between his clerks and their creditors; duns were put out at the door. "Government offices," he said, "were not meant for the transaction of private business." Loud was the scoffing when Vimeux clanked up the stairs and along the corridors with spurs on his boots. Bixiou, practical joker to the department, drew a caricature of Vimeux mounted on a pasteboard hobby horse, and sent the drawing circulating through Clergeot's and la Billardière's divisions. A subscription list was attached. M. Baudoyer's name was put down for a hundredweight of hay from the stock supplied for his own private consumption, and all the clerks cut gibes at their neighbor's expense. Vimeux himself, like the good-natured fellow that he was, subscribed under the name of "Miss Fairfax."

The handsome clerk of Vimeux's stamp has his post for a living and his face for his fortune. He is a faithful supporter of masked balls at carnival-tide, though sometimes even there he fails in his quest. A good many of his kind give up the search, and end by marrying milliners or old women; sometimes some young lady is charmed with his fine person, and with her he spins out a clandestine romance that ends in marriage, a love story diversified by tedious letters, which, however, produce their effect. Occasionally one here and there waxes bolder. He sees a woman drive past in the Champs-Élysées, procures her address, hurls impassioned letters at her, finds a bargain which, unfortunately, encourages ignoble speculation of this kind.

The Bixiou (pronounced Bisiou) mentioned above was a caricaturist; Dutocq and Rabourdin, whom he dubbed *La vertueuse Rabourdin,* were alike fair game to him; Baudoyer he called *La Place-Baudoyer,* by way of summing up his chief's commonplace character; du Bruel was christened *Flonflon.* Bixiou was beyond question the wittiest and cleverest man in the division, or, indeed, in the department; but his was a monkey's cleverness, desultory and aimless. Baudoyer and Godard protected him in spite of his malicious ways, because he was extremely useful to them; he did their

work for them out of hand. He wanted du Bruel's or Godard's place, but he stood in his own light. Sometimes—this was when he had done some good stroke of business, such as the portraits in the Fualdès case (which he drew out of his own head), or pictures of the Castaing trial—he turned the service to ridicule. Sometimes he would be very industrious in a sudden fit of desire to get on; and then again he would neglect the work for a vaudeville, which he never by any chance finished. He was, moreover, selfish, close-fisted, and yet extravagant; or, in other words, he lavished money only upon himself; he was fractious, aggressive, and indiscreet, making mischief for pure love of mischief.

Bixiou was especially given to attacking the weak; he respected nothing and no one; he believed neither in France, nor God, nor Art, in neither Greek nor Turk, nor Champ-d'Asile, nor in the Monarchy; and he made a point of jeering at everything which he did not understand. He was the very first to put a black priest's cap on Charles X.'s head on five-franc pieces. He took off Dr. Gall at his lectures till the most closely-buttoned diplomate must have choked with laughter. It was a standing joke with this formidable wag to heat the office stoves so hot that if any one imprudently ventured out of the sudatorium he was pretty certain to catch cold; while Bixiou enjoyed the further satisfaction of wasting the fuel supplied by the Government. Bixiou was not an ordinary man in his hoaxes; he varied them with so much ingenuity that somebody was invariably taken in. He guessed every one's wishes; this was the secret of his success in this line; he knew the way to every castle in Spain; and a man is easy to hoax through his day-dreams, because he is a willing accomplice. Bixiou would draw you out for hours together. And yet, though Bixiou was a profound observer, though he displayed extraordinary tact for purposes of quizzing, he could not apply his aptitude to the purpose of making other men useful to him, nor to the art of getting on in life. He liked best of all to torment la Billardière junior, his pet aversion and nightmare; but nevertheless he coaxed and flattered the

young fellow the better to quiz him. He used to send him love-letters signed "Comtesse de M——" or "Marquise de B——", making an appointment under the clock in the *foyer* of the Opéra at Shrovetide, and then after making a public exhibition of the young man he would let loose a grisette upon him. He made common cause with Dutocq (whom he regarded as a serious hoaxer); he made it a labor of love to support him in his detestation of Rabourdin and his praises of Baudoyer.

Jean Jacques Bixiou was the grandson of a Paris grocer. His father died as a colonel in the army, leaving the boy to the care of his grandmother, who had lost her husband and married one Descoings, her shopman. Descoings died in 1822. When Bixiou left school and looked about for some means of earning a livelihood, he tried Art for a while; but in spite of his friendship for Joseph Bridau, a friend of childhood, he gave up painting for caricatures, and vignettes, and the kind of work known twenty years afterwards as book illustration. The influence of the Ducs de Maufrigneuse and de Rhétoré (whose acquaintance he made through opera-dancers) procured him his place in 1819. He was on the best of terms with des Lupeaulx, whom he met in society as an equal; he talked familiarly to du Bruel; he was a living proof of Rabourdin's observations on the continual process of destruction at work in the administrative hierarchy of Paris, when a man acquired personal importance outside the office. Short but well made, small of feature, remarkable for a vague resemblance to Napoleon; a young man of twenty-seven, with thin lips, a flat, perpendicular chin, fair hair, auburn whiskers, sparkling eyes, and a caustic voice—here you have Bixiou. All senses and intellect, he spoiled his career by an unbridled love of pleasure, which plunged him into continual dissipation. He was an intrepid man of pleasure; he ran about after grisettes, smoked, dined, and supped, and told good stories, everywhere adapting himself to his company, and shining behind the scenes, at a grisettes' ball, or the Allée des Veuves. At table or as one of a pleasure

party Bixiou was equally astonishing; he was equally alert and in spirits at midnight in the street, or at his first waking in the morning; but, like most great comic actors, he was gloomy and depressed when by himself. Launched forth into a world of actors, actresses, writers, artists, and a certain kind of women whose riches are apt to take wings, he lived well, he went to the theatre without payment, he played at Frascati's, and often won. He was, in truth, profoundly an artist, but only by flashes; life for him was a sort of swing on which he swayed to and fro without troubling himself about the moment when the cord would break. Among people accustomed to a brilliant display of intellect, Bixiou was in great request for the sake of his liveliness and prodigality of ideas; but none of his friends liked him. He could not resist the temptation of an epigram; he sacrificed his neighbor on either hand at dinner before the first course was over. In spite of his superficial gaiety, a certain secret discontent with his social position crept into his conversation; he aspired to something better, and the fatal lurking imp in his character would not permit him to assume the gravity which makes so much impression on fools. He lived in chambers in the Rue de Ponthieu; it was a regular bivouac; the three rooms were given up to the disorder of a bachelor establishment. Often he would talk of leaving France to try a violent assault on fortune in America. No fortune-teller could have predicted his future, for all his talents were incomplete; he could not work hard and steadily; he was always intoxicated with pleasure, always behaving as if the world were to come to an end on the morrow.

As to dress, his claim was that he was not ridiculous on that score; and, perhaps, he was the one man in the department of whom it would not be said, "There goes a Government clerk!" He wore elegant boots, black trousers with straps to them, a fancy waistcoat, a cravat (the eternal gift of the grisette), a hat from Bandoni's, and dark kid gloves. His bearing was not ungraceful, being both easy and unaffected. So it came to pass that when summoned to hear a

reprimand from des Lupeaulx, after carrying his insolence towards the Baron de la Billardière a little too far, he was content to rejoin, "You would take me on again for the sake of my clothes." And des Lupeaulx could not help laughing.

The most pleasing hoax ever perpetrated by Bixiou in the offices was devised for Godard's benefit. To him Bixiou presented a Chinese butterfly, which the senior clerk put in his collection, and exhibits to this day; he has not yet found out that it is a piece of painted paper. Bixiou had the patience to elaborate a masterpiece for the sake of playing a trick upon the chief clerk's assistant.

The devil always provides a Bixiou with a victim. Baudoyer's office accordingly contained a butt, a poor copying-clerk, aged two-and-twenty. Auguste-Jean-François Minard, for that was his name, was in receipt of a salary of fifteen hundred francs. He had married for love. His wife was a doorkeeper's daughter, an artificial-flower maker, who worked at home for Mlle. Godard. Minard had seen the girl in the shop in the Rue de Richelieu. Zélie Lorain, in the days before her marriage, had many dreams of changing her station in life. She had been trained at the Conservatoire as dancer, singer, and actress by turns; and often she had thought of doing as many other girls did, but the fear that things might turn out badly for her, and she might sink to unspeakable depths, had kept Zélie in the paths of virtue. She was revolving all kinds of hazy projects in her mind when Minard came forward with his offer of marriage and gave them a definite shape. Zélie was earning five hundred francs a year; Minard had fifteen hundred. In the belief that two persons can live on two thousand francs, they were married without settlements and in the most economical fashion. The pair of turtle-doves found a nest on a third floor near the Barrière de Courcelles, at a rent of a hundred crowns. There was a very neat little kitchen, with a cheap plaid paper at fifteen sous the piece upon the walls, a brick floor assiduously beeswaxed and polished, walnut-wood furniture,

and white cotton curtains in the windows; there was a room in which Zélie made her flowers; a parlor beyond, with a round table in the middle, a looking-glass on the wall, a clock representing a revolving crystal fountain, dark haircloth chairs, and gilt candlesticks in gauze covers; and a blue-and-white bedroom, with a mahogany bedstead, a bureau, a bit of striped carpet at the bed-foot, half a dozen easy-chairs and four chairs, and a little cherry-wood cot in the corner where the little ones, a boy and girl, used to sleep. Zélie nursed her children herself, did the cooking and the work of the house, and made her flowers. There was something touching in their happy, hardworking, unpretending comfort. As soon as Zélie felt that Minard loved her, she loved him with all her heart. Love draws love; it is the "deep calling unto deep" of the Bible.

Minard, poor fellow, used to leave his wife asleep in bed in the morning and do her marketing for her. He took the finished flowers to the shop on his way to the office of a morning, and bought the materials as he came home in the afternoon. Then, as he waited for dinner, he cut or stamped out the petals, made the stalks, and mixed the colors for her. The little, thin, slight, nervous man, with the curled chestnut hair, clear hazel eyes, and dazzlingly fair but freckled complexion, possessed a quiet and unboasting courage below the surface. He could write as well as Vimeux. At the office he kept himself to himself, did his work, and maintained the reserve of a thoughtful man whose life is hard. Bixiou, the pitiless, nicknamed him "the white rabbit," on account of his white eyelashes and scanty eyebrows. Minard was a Rabourdin on a lower level. He was burning with a desire to put his Zélie in a good position; he wanted to make a fortune quickly, and to this end he was trying to hit upon an idea, a discovery, or an improvement in the ocean of Parisian industries and cravings for new luxury. Minard's seeming stupidity was the result of mental tension; he went from the *Double Pâte des Sultanes* to *Cephalic Oil;* from phosphorus boxes to portable gas; from hinged clogs to hydrostatic lamps,

making the entire round of the infinitesimally small details of material civilization. He bore Bixiou's jests as a busy man bears with the buzzing of a fly; he never even lost his temper. And Bixiou, quick-witted though he was, never suspected the depth of contempt that Minard felt for him. Minard regarded a quarrel with Bixiou as a waste of time, and so at length he had tired out his persecutor.

Minard was very plainly dressed at the office; he wore trousers of drill till October, shoes and gaiters, a mohair waistcoat, a beaver-cloth coat in winter and twill in summer, and a straw or silk hat according to the season, for Zélie was his pride. He would have gone without food to buy a new dress for her. He breakfasted at home with his wife, and ate nothing till he returned. Once a month he took Zélie to the theatre with a ticket given by du Bruel or Bixiou; for Bixiou did all sorts of things, even a kindness now and again. On these occasions Zélie's mother left her porter's room to look after the baby. Minard had succeeded to Vimeux's place in Baudoyer's office.

Mme. and M. Minard paid their calls in person on New Year's Day. People used to wonder how the wife of a poor clerk on fifteen hundred francs a year could manage to keep her husband in a suit of black, and afford to drive in a cab, and to wear embroidered muslin dresses and silk petticoats, a Tuscan straw bonnet with flowers in it, prunella shoes, magnificent fichus, and a Chinese parasol, and yet be virtuous; while Mme. Colleville or such and such a "lady" could scarcely make both ends meet on two thousand four hundred francs.

Two of the clerks were friends to a ridiculous degree, for anything is matter for a joke in a Government office. One of these was a senior draughting-clerk in Baudoyer's office; he had been chief clerk's assistant, and even chief clerk, for some considerable time during the Restoration. Colleville, for that was his name, had in Mme. Colleville a wife as much above the ordinary level in her way as Mme. Rabourdin in another. Colleville, the son of a first violin at the Opéra, had been smitten with the daughter of a well-known opera-

dancer. Some clever and charming Parisiennes can make their husbands happy without losing their liberty; Mme. Colleville was one of these. She made Colleville's house a meeting-place for orators of the Chamber and the best artists of the day. People were apt to forget how humble a place Colleville occupied in his own house. Flavie was a little too prolific; her conduct offered such a handle to gossip that Mme. Rabourdin had refused all her invitations.

Colleville's friend, one Thuillier, was senior draughting-clerk in Rabourdin's office; and while he occupied precisely the same position, his career in the service had been cut short for the same reasons. If any one knew Colleville, he knew Thuillier, and *vice versâ*. It had so fallen out that they both entered the office at the same time, and their friendship arose out of this coincidence. Pretty Mme. Colleville (so it was said among the clerks) had not repulsed Thuillier's assiduities. Thuillier's wife had brought him no children. Thuillier, otherwise "Beau Thuillier," had been a lady-killer in his youth, and now was as idle as Colleville was industrious. Colleville not only played the first clarionet at the Opéra-Comique—he kept tradesmen's books in the morning before he went to the office, and worked very hard to bring up his family although he did not lack influence. Others regarded him as a very shrewd individual, and so much the more so because he hid his ambitions under a semblance of indifference. To all appearance he was satisfied with his lot; he liked work; he found everybody, even to the chiefs themselves, inclined to aid so brave a struggle for a livelihood. Only recently, within the last few days in fact, Mme. Colleville had reformed her ways, and seemed to be tending towards religion; whereupon a rumor went abroad through the offices that the lady meant to betake herself to the Congrégation in search of some more certain support than the famous orator François Keller, for his influence hitherto had failed to procure a good place for Colleville. Flavie had previously addressed herself (it was one of the mistakes of her life) to des Lupeaulx.

Colleville had a mania for reading the fortunes of famous

men in anagrams made by their names. He would spend whole months in arranging and rearranging the letters to discover some significance in them. In *Révolution française,* he discovered *Un Corse la finira;—Vierge de son mari* in Marie de Vigneros, Cardinal de Richelieu's niece;—*Henrici mei casta dea* in Catharina de Medicis;—*Eh! c'est large nez* in Charles Genest, the Abbé whose big nose amused the Duc de Bourgogne so much at the Court of Louis XIV. All anagrams known to history had set Colleville wondering. He raised the play on words into a science; a man's fate (according to him) was written in a phrase composed of the letters of his name, style, and titles. Ever since Charles X. came to the throne he had been busy with that monarch's anagram. Thuillier maintained that an anagram was a pun in letters; but Thuillier was rather given to puns. Colleville, a man of generous nature, was bound by a well-nigh indissoluble friendship to Thuillier, a pattern of an egoist! It was an insoluble problem, though many of the clerks explained it by the observation that "Thuillier is well to do, and Colleville's family is a heavy burden!" And, truth to say, Thuillier was supposed to supplement his salary by lending money out at interest. Men in business often sent to ask to speak with him, and Thuillier would go down for a few minutes' talk with them in the courtyard; but these interviews were undertaken on account of his sister, Mlle. Thuillier. The friendship thus consolidated by time was based upon events and attachments that came about naturally enough; but the story has been given elsewhere,* and critics might complain of the tedious length of it if it were repeated. Still, it is perhaps worth while to point out that while a great deal was known in the offices as to Mme. Colleville, the clerks scarcely knew that there was a Mme. Thuillier. Colleville, the active man with a burdensome family of children, was fat, flourishing, and jolly; while Thuillier, the "buck of the Empire," with his idle ways and no apparent cares, was slender in figure, haggard, and almost melancholy to behold.

* In *Les Petits Bourgeois.*

"We do not know whether our friendships spring from our unlikeness or likeness to each other," Rabourdin would say, in allusion to the pair.

Chazelle and Paulmier, in direct contrast to the Siamese twins, were always at war with each other. One of them smoked, the other took snuff, and the pair quarreled incessantly as to the best way of using tobacco. One failing common to both made them equally tiresome to their fellow-clerks—they were perpetually squabbling over the cost of commodities, the price of green peas or mackerel, the amounts paid by their colleagues for hats, boots, coats, umbrellas, ties, and gloves. Each bragged of his new discoveries, and always kept them to himself. Chazelle collected bookseller's prospectuses and pictorial placards and designs; but he never subscribed to anything. Paulmier, Chazelle's fellow-chatterbox, went once to the great Dauriat to congratulate him on bringing out books printed on hot-pressed paper with printed covers, and bade him persevere in the path of improvements —and Paulmier had not a book in his possession! Chazelle, being henpecked at home, tried to give himself independent airs abroad, and supplied Paulmier with endless gibes; while Paulmier, a bachelor, fasted as frequently as Vimeux himself, and his threadbare clothes and thinly disguised poverty furnished Chazelle with an inexhaustible text. Chazelle and Paulmier were both visibly increasing in waist girth; Chazelle's small, rotund, pointed stomach had the impudence, according to Bixiou, to be always first, Paulmier's fluctuated from right to left; Bixiou had them measured once or so in a quarter. Both were between thirty and forty, and both were sufficiently vapid; they did nothing after hours. They were specimens of your thoroughbred Government clerk—their brains had been addled with scribbling and long continuance in the service. Chazelle used to doze over his work, while the pen which he still held in his hand marked his breathings with little dots on the paper. Then Paulmier would say that Chazell's wife gave him no rest at night. And Chazelle would retort that Paulmier had taken drugs for four months

out of the twelve, and prophesy that a grizette would be the death of him. Whereupon Paulmier would demonstrate that Chazelle was in the habit of marking the almanac when Mme. Chazelle showed herself complaisant. By dint of washing their dirty linen in public, and flinging particulars of their domestic life at one another, the pair had won a fairly-merited and general contempt. "Do you take me for a Chazelle?" was a remark that put an end to a wearisome discussion.

M. Poiret junior was so called to distinguish him from an elder brother who had left the service. Poiret senior had retired to the Maison Vauquer, at which boarding-house Poiret junior occasionally dined, meaning likewise to retire thither some day for good. Poiret junior had been thirty years in the department. Every action in the poor creature's life was part of a routine; Nature herself is more variable in her revolutions. He always put his things in the same place, laid his pen on the same mark in the grain of the wood, sat down in his place at the same hour, and went to warm himself at the stove at the same minute; for his one vanity consisted in wearing an infallible watch, though he always set it daily by the clock of the Hôtel de Ville, which he passed on his way from the Rue du Martroi.

Between six and eight o'clock in the morning Poiret made up the books of a large draper's shop in the Rue Saint-Antoine; from six to eight in the evening he again acted as book-keeper to the firm of Camusot in the Rue des Bourdonnais. In this way he made an income of a thousand crowns a year, including his salary. By this time he was within a few months of his retirement upon a pension, and therefore treated office intrigues with much indifference. Retirement had already dealt Poiret senior his deathblow; and probably when Poiret junior should no longer be obliged to walk daily from the Rue de Martroi to the office, to sit on his chair at a table and copy out documents daily, he too would age very quickly. Poiret junior collected back numbers of the *Moniteur* and of the newspaper to which the clerks subscribed. He achieved this with a collector's enthusiasm. If a number

was mislaid, or if one of the clerks took away a copy and forgot to bring it back again, Poiret junior went forthwith to the newspaper office to ask for another copy, and returned delighted with the cashier's politeness. He always came in contact with a charming young fellow; journalists, according to him, were pleasant and little known people. Poiret junior was a man of average height, with dull eyes, a feeble, colorless expression, a tanned skin puckered into gray wrinkles with small bluish spots scattered over them, a snub nose, and a sunken mouth, in which one or two bad teeth still lingered on. Thuillier used to say that it was useless for Poiret to look in the mirror, because he had lost his eye-teeth.* His long, thin arms terminated in big hands without any pretension to whiteness; his gray hair, flattened down on his head by the pressure of his hat, gave him something of a clerical appearance; a resemblance the less welcome to him, because though he was not able to give an account of his religious opinions, he hated priests and ecclesiastics of every sort and description. This antipathy, however, did not prevent him from feeling an extreme attachment for the Government, whatever it might happen to be. Even in the very coldest weather, Poiret never buttoned his old-fashioned greatcoat, or wore any but laced shoes or black trousers. He had gone to the same shops for thirty years. When his tailor died, he asked for leave to go to the funeral, shook hands at the graveside with the man's son, and assured him of his custom. Poiret was on friendly terms with all his tradesmen; he took an interest in their affairs, chatted with them, listened to the tale of their grievances, and paid promptly. If he had occasion to write to make a change in an order, he observed the utmost ceremony, dating the letter, and beginning with "Monsieur" on a separate line; then he took a rough copy, and kept it in a pasteboard case, labeled "My Correspondence."

No life could be more methodical. Poiret kept every

* *Parce qu'il ne se voyait pas dedans* (*de dents*). Here, as in many other instances, it is only possible to suggest in the English version that a pun has been made in the French.—*Tr.*

receipted bill, however small the amount; and all his private account books, year by year, since he came into the office, were put away in paper covers. He dined for a fixed sum per month at the same eating-house (the sign of the *Sucking Calf,* in the Place du Châtelet), and at the same table (the waiters used to keep his place for him) ; and as he never gave *The Golden Cocoon,* the famous silk-mercer's establishment, so much as five minutes more than the due time, he always reached the Café David, the most famous café in the Quarter, at half-past eight, and stayed there till eleven o'clock. He had frequented that café likewise for thirty years, and punctually took his *bavaroise* at half-past ten; listening to the political discussions with his arms crossed on his walking-stick, and his chin on his right hand, but he never took part in them. The lady at the desk was the one woman with whom he liked to converse; to her ears he confided all the little events of his daily existence, for he sat at a table close beside her. Sometimes he would play at dominoes, the one game that he had managed to learn; but if his partners failed to appear, Poiret was occasionally seen to dose, with his back against the panels, while the newspaper frame in his hand sank down on the slab before him.

Poiret took an interest in all that went on in Paris. He spent Sunday in looking round at buildings in course of construction; he would talk to the pensioner who sees that no one goes inside the hoardings, and fret over the delays, the lack of money or of building materials, and other obstacles in the way of the architect. He was heard to say, "I have seen the Louvre rise from its ruins; I saw the first beginnings of the Place du Châtelet, the Quai aux Fleurs, and the Markets." He and his brother were born at Troyes; their father, a clerk of a farmer of taxes, had sent them both to Paris to learn their business in a Government office. Their mother brought a notorious life to a disastrous close; for the brothers learned to their sorrow that she died in the hospital at Troyes, in spite of frequent remittances. And not merely did they vow then and there never to marry, but held children in abhorrence;

they could not feel at ease with them; they feared them much as others might fear lunatics, and scrutinized them with haggard eyes. Drudgery had crushed all the life out of them both in Robert Lindet's time. The Government had not treated them justly, but they thought themselves lucky to keep their heads on their shoulders, and only grumbled between themselves at the ingratitude of the administration—for they had "organized" the "Maximum"! When the before-mentioned trick was played upon Phellion, and his famous sentence was taken to Rabourdin for correction, Poiret took the draughting-clerk aside into the corridor to say, "You may be sure, sir, that I opposed it with all my might."

Poiret had never been outside Paris since he came into the city. He began from the first to keep a diary, in which he set out the principal events of the day. Du Bruel told him that Byron had done the same; the comparison overwhelmed Poiret with joy, and induced him to buy a copy of Chastopalli's translation of Byron's works, of which he understood not a word. At the office he was often seen in a melancholy attitude; he looked as if he were meditating deeply, but his mind was a blank. He did not know a single one of his fellow-lodgers; he went about with the key of his room in his pockets. On New Year's Day he left a card himself on every clerk in the division, and paid no visits.

Once, it was in the dog-days, Bixiou took it into his head to grease the inside of Poiret's hat with lard. Poiret junior (he was then fifty-two years of age) had worn the hat for nine whole years; Bixiou had never seen him in any other. Bixiou had dreamed of the hat of nights; it was before his eyes while he ate; and in the interests of his digestion, he made up his mind to rid the office of the unclean thing. Poiret junior went out towards four o'clock. He went his way through the streets of Paris, in a tropical heat, for the sun's rays were reflected back again from the walls and the pavement. Suddenly he felt that his head was streaming with perspiration; and he seldom perspired. Deeming that he was ill, or on the verge of an illness, he went home instead

of repairing to the *Sucking Calf,* took out his diary, and made the following entry:

"This day, July 3rd, 1823, surprised by an unaccountable perspiration, possibly a symptom of the sweating sickness, a malady peculiar to Champagne. Incline to consult Dr. Haudry. First felt the attack by the Quai d'École."

Suddenly, as he wrote bareheaded, it struck him that the supposed sweat arose from some external cause. He wiped his countenance and examined his hat; but he did not venture to undo the lining, and could make nothing of it. Subsequently he made another entry in the diary:

"Took the hat to the Sieur Tournan, hatter in the Rue Saint-Martin; seeing that I suspect that something else caused the sweat, which in that case would not be a sweat at all, but simply the effect of an addition of some kind, more or less recently made."

M. Tournan immediately detected the presence of a fatty substance obtained by distillation from a hog or sow, and pointed it out to his customer. Poiret departed in a hat lent my M. Tournan till the new one should be ready for him; but before he went to bed he added another sentence to his diary:

"It has been ascertained that my hat contained lard, otherwise hog's fat."

The inexplicable fact occupied Poiret's mind for a fortnight; he never could understand how the phenomenon had been brought about. There was talk at the office of showers of frogs and other canicular portents; a portrait of Napoleon had been found in a elm-tree root; all kinds of grotesque freaks of natural history cropped up. Vimeux told him one day that he, Vimeux, had had his face dyed black by his hat,

and added that hatters sold terrible trash. Poiret went several times after that to Sieur Tournan's to reassure his mind as to the processes of manufacture.

There was yet another clerk in Rabourdin's office. This personage avowedly had the courage of his opinions, professed the politics of the Left Centre, and worked himself into indignation over the unlucky white slaves in Baudoyer's office, and against that gentleman's tyranny. Fleury openly took in an Opposition sheet, wore a wide-brimmed gray felt hat, blue trousers with red stripes, a blue waistcoat adorned with gilt buttons, and a double-breasted overcoat that made him look like a quartermaster in the gendarmerie. His principles remained unshaken, and the administration nevertheless continued to employ him. Yet he prophesied evil of the Government if it persisted in mixing politics and religion. He made no secret of his predilection for Napoleon, especially since the great man's death made a dead letter of the law against all partisans of the "usurper." Fleury, ex-captain of a regiment of the line under the Emperor, a tall, fine, dark-haired fellow, was a money-taker at the Cirque-Olympique. Bixiou had never indulged in a caricature of him; for the rough trooper was not only a very good shot and a first-rate swordsman, but he appeared capable of going to brutal extremities upon occasion. Fleury was a zealous subscriber to *Victoires et Conquêtes;* but he declined to pay, and kept the issues as they appeared, basing his refusal upon the fact that the number stated in the prospectus had been exceeded.

He worshiped M. Rabourdin, for M. Rabourdin had interfered to save him from dismissal. A remark once escaped the ex-warrior, to the effect that if anything should come to M. Rabourdin through anybody else, he, Fleury, would kill that some one else; and Dutocq ever since went in such fear of Fleury, that he fawned upon him.

Fleury was overburdened with debts. He played his creditors all kinds of tricks. Being expert in the law, he never by any chance put his name to a bill; and as he himself had attached his salary in the names of fictitious creditors, he drew pretty nearly the whole of it. He had formed a very intimate con-

nection with a super at the Porte-Saint-Martin, and his furniture was removed to her house. So he played écarté joyously, and charmed social gatherings with his talents; he could drink off a glass of champagne at a draught without moistening his lips, and he knew all Béranger's songs by heart. His voice was still fine and sonorous; he allowed it to be seen that he was proud of it. His three great men were Napoleon, Bolivar, and Béranger. Foy, Laffitte, and Casimir Delavigne only enjoyed his esteem. Fleury, as you guess, was a man of the South; he was pretty sure to end as the responsible editor of some Liberal paper.

Desroys was the mysterious man of the division. He rubbed shoulders with no one, talked little, and hid his life so successfully that no one knew where he lived, nor how he lived, nor who his protectors were. Seeking a reason for this silence, some held that Desroys was one of the Carbonari, and some that he was an Orleanist; some said that he was a spy, others that he was a deep individual. But Desroys was simply the son of a member of the Convention who had not voted for the king's death. Reserved and cold by temperament, he had formed his own conclusions of the world, and looked to no one but himself. As a Republican in secret, an admirer of Paul Louis Courier, and a friend of Michel Chrestien's, he was waiting till time and the common-sense of the majority should bring about the triumph of his political opinions in Europe. Wherefore his dreams were of Young Germany and Young Italy. His heart swelled high with that unintelligent collective affection for the species, which must be called "humanitarianism," eldest child of a defunct philosophy, an affection which is to the divine charity of the Catholic religion as system is to art, as reasoning is to effort. This conscientious political Puritan, this apostle of an impossible Equality, regretted that penury forced him into the service of the Government; he was trying to get employment in some coach office. Lean and lank, prosy and serious, as a man may be expected to be if he feels that he may be called upon some day to give his head for the great object of his life, Desroys lived on a page of

Volney, studied St. Just, and was engaged upon a rehabilitation of Robespierre, considered as a continuer of the work of Jesus Christ.

One more among these personages deserves a stroke or two of the pencil. This is little la Billardière. For his misfortune he had lost his mother. He had interest with the minister; he was exempt from the rough and ready treatment that he should have received from *"la Place-Baudoyer"*; and all the ministerial salons were open to him. Everybody detested the youth for his insolence and conceit. Heads of departments were civil to him, but the clerks had put him beyond the pale of good fellowship with a grotesque politeness invented for his benefit. Little la Billardière was a tall, slim, wizened youth of two-and-twenty, with the manners of an Englishman; his dandy's airs were an affront to the office; he came to it scented and curled, with impeccable collars and primrose-colored gloves, and a constantly renewed hat lining; he carried an eyeglass; he breakfasted at the Palais Royal. A veneer of manner which did not seem altogether to belong to him covered his natural stupidity. Benjamin de la Billardière had an excellent opinion of himself; he had every aristocratic defect, and no corresponding graces. He felt quite sure of being "somebody," and had thoughts of writing a book; he would gain the Cross as an author and set it down to his administrative talents. So he cajoled Bixiou with a view to exploiting him, but as yet he had not ventured to broach the subject. This noble heart was waiting impatiently for the death of the father who had but lately been made a baron. "The Chevalier de la Billardière" (so his name appeared on his cards) had his armorial bearings framed and hung up at the office, to wit, *sable,* two swords saltire-wise, on a chief *azure,* three stars, and the motto: A TOUJOURS FIDÈLE. He had a craze for talking of heraldry. Once he asked the young Vicomte de Portenduère why his arms were blazoned thus, and drew down upon himself the neat reply, "It was none of my doing." Little la Billardière talked much of his devotion to the Monarchy, and of the Dauphiness'

graciousness to him. He was on very good terms with des Lupeaulx, often breakfasted with him, and believed that des Lupeaulx was his friend. Bixiou, posing as his mentor, had hopes of ridding the division, and France likewise, of the young coxcomb by plunging him into dissipation; and he made no secret of his intentions.

Such were the principal figures in la Billardière's division. Some others there were besides which more or less approached these types in habits of life or appearance. Baudoyer's office boasted various examples of the genus clerk in divers bald-fronted, chilly mortals, with frames well wadded round with flannel. These individuals carried thorn-sticks, wore threadbare clothes, and never were seen without an umbrella. They perched, as a rule, on fifth floors, and cultivated flowers at that height. Clerks of this type rank half-way between the prosperous porter and the needy artisan; they are too far from the administrative centre to hope for any promotion whatsoever; they are pawns upon the bureaucratic chessboard. When their turn comes to go on guard, they rejoice to get a day away from the office. There is nothing that they will not do for extras. How they exist at all their very employers would be puzzled to say; their lives are an indictment against the State that assuredly causes the misery by accepting such a condition of things.

At sight of their strange faces it is hard to decide whether these quill-bearing mammals become cretinous at their task, or whether, on the other hand, they would never have undertaken it if they had not been, to some extent, cretins from birth. Perhaps Nature and the Government may divide the responsibility between them. "Villagers," according to an unknown writer, "are submitted to the influences of atmospheric conditions and surrounding circumstances. They do not seek to explain the fact to themselves. They are in a manner identified with their natural surroundings. Slowly and imperceptibly the ideas and ways of feeling awakened by those surroundings will permeate their being, and come to the surface of their lives, in their personal appearance and in

their actions, with variations for each individual organization and temperament. And thus, if any student feels attracted to the little known and fruitful field of physiological inquiry, which includes the effects produced by external natural agents upon human character, for him the villager becomes a most interesting and trustworthy book." But for the employé, Nature is replaced by the office; his horizon is bounded upon all sides by green pasteboard cases. For him atmospheric influences mean the air of the corridors, the stuffy atmosphere of unventilated rooms where men are crowded together; and the odor of paper and quills. A floor of bare bricks or parquetry, bestrewn with strange litter, and besprinkled from the messenger's watering-can, is the scene of his labors; his sky is the ceiling, to which his yawns are addressed; his element is dust. The above remarks on the villager might have been meant for the clerk; he too is "identified" with his surroundings. The sun scarcely shines into the horrid dens known as public offices; the thinking powers of their occupants are strictly confined to a monotonous round. Their prototype, the mill-horse, yawns hideously over such work, and cannot stand it for long. And since several learned doctors see reason to dread the effects of such half-barbarous, half-civilized surroundings upon the mental constitution of human beings pent up among them, Rabourdin surely was profoundly right when he proposed to cut down the number of the staff, and asked for heavy salaries and hard work for them. Men are not bored when they have great things to do.

As government offices are at present constituted, four hours out of the nine which the clerks are supposed to give to the State are wasted, as will presently be seen, over talks, anecdotes, and squabbles, and, more than all, over office intrigues. You do not know, unless you frequent government offices, how much the clerks' little world resembles the world of school; the similarity strikes you wherever men live together; and in the army or the laws-courts you find the school again on a rather larger scale. The body of clerks, thus pent up for eight hours at a stretch, looked upon the offices as

classrooms in which a certain amount of lessons must be done. The master on duty was called the head of the division; extra pay took the place of good conduct prizes, and always fell to favorites. They teased and disliked each other, and yet there was a sort of good-fellowship among them —though, even so, it was cooler than the same feeling in a regiment; and in the regiment, again, it is not so strong as it is among schoolboys. As a man advances in life, egoism develops with his growth and slackens the secondary ties of affection. What is an office, in short, but a world in miniature?—a world with its unaccountable freaks, its friendships and hatreds, its envy and greed, its continual movement to the front? There, too, is the light talk that makes many a wound, and espionage that never ceases.

At this particular moment the whole division headed by M. le Baron de la Billardière was shaken by an extraordinary commotion; and, indeed, coming events fully justified the excitement, for heads of divisions do not die every day; and no tontine insurance association can calculate the probabilities of life and death with more sagacity than a government office. In government clerks, as in children, self-interest leaves no room for pity; but the clerk has hypocrisy in addition.

Towards eight o'clock Baudoyer's staff were taking their places, whereas Rabourdin's clerks had scarcely begun to put in an appearance at nine; and yet the work was done much more quickly in the latter office. Dutocq had weighty reasons of his own for arriving early. He had stolen into the private office the night before, and detected Sébastien in the act of copying out papers for Rabourdin. He had hidden himself, and watched Sébastien go out without the papers; and then, feeling sure of finding a tolerably bulky rough draft and the fair copy, he had hunted through one pasteboard case after another, till at last he found the terrible list. Hurrying away to a lithographer's establishment, he had two impressions of the sheet taken off with a copying-press, and in this way became possessed of Rabourdin's own handwriting. Then,

to prevent suspicion, he went to the office the first thing in the morning and put the rough draft back in the case. Sébastien had stayed till midnight in the Rue Duphot. In spite of his diligence, hatred was beforehand with him. Hatred dwelt in the Rue Saint Louis Saint-Honoré, whereas devotion lived in the Rue du Roi Doré in the Marais. Rabourdin was to feel the effect of that trivial delay through the rest of his life. Sébastien hurried to open the case, found all in order, and locked up the rough draft and unfinished copy in his chief's desk.

On a morning towards the end of December the light is usually dim; in our offices, indeed, they often work by lamplight until ten o'clock. So Sébastien did not notice the mark of the stone on the paper; but at half-past nine, when Rabourdin looked closely at his draft, he saw that it had been submitted to some copying process; he was the more likely to see the traces of the slab, because of late he had been much interested in experiments in lithography, for he thought that a press might do the work of a copying-clerk.

Rabourdin seated himself in his chair. So deeply was he absorbed in his reflections, that he took the tongs and began to build up the fire. Then, curious to know into what hands his secret had fallen, he sent for Sébastien.

"Did any one come to the office before you?"

"Yes; M. Dutocq."

"Good. He is punctual. Send Antoine to me."

Rabourdin was too magnanimous to cause Sébastien needless distress by reproaching him now that the mischief was done. He said no more about it. Antoine came. Rabourdin asked if any of the clerks had stayed after four o'clock on the previous day. Antoine said that M. Dutocq had stayed even later than M. de la Roche. Rabourdin nodded, and resumed the course of his reflections.

"Twice I have prevented his dismissal," he said to himself, "and this is my reward!"

For Rabourdin that morning was to be the solemn crisis when great captains decide upon a battle after weighing all

possible consequences. No one better knew the temper of the offices! he was perfectly aware that anything resembling espionage or tale-telling is no more pardoned by clerks than by schoolboys. The man that can tell tales of his comrades is disgraced, ruined, and traduced; ministers in such a case will drop their instrument. Any man in the service, under these circumstances, sends in his resignation—no other course is open to him; upon his honor there lies a stain that can never be wiped out. Explanations are useless—nobody wants them, nobody will listen to them. A cabinet minister in the like case is a great man; it is his business to choose men; but a mere subordinate is taken for a spy, no matter what his motives may be. Even while Rabourdin measured the emptiness of this folly, he saw the depths of it—saw, too, that he must sink. He was not so much overwhelmed as taken by surprise; so he sat pondering his best course of action in the matter, and knew nothing of the commotion caused in the offices by the news of the death of M. de la Billardière till he heard of it through young de la Brière, who could appreciate the immense value of the chief clerk.

Meanwhile in the Baudoyer's office (for the clerks were respectively known as the Baudoyers and the Rabourdins) Bixiou was giving the details of la Billardière's last moments for the benefit of Minard, Desroys, M. Godard (whom he had fetched out of his sanctum), and Dutocq. A double motive had sent the last-named individual hurrying over to the Baudoyers.

Bixiou (*standing before the stove, holding first one boot and then the other to the fire to dry the soles*). "This morning at half-past seven I went to inquire after our worthy and revered director, Chevalier of Christ, et cætera. Et cætera? My goodness, I should think so, gentlemen; only yesterday the Baron was a score of *et cæteras,* and now to-day he is nothing, not even a government clerk. I asked what sort of a night he had had. His nurse, who does not die, but surrenders, told me that towards five o'clock this morning he had felt uneasy about the Royal Family. He got somebody to read over

the names of those that had sent to make inquiries. Then he said, 'Fill my snuff-box, give me the newspaper, bring me my glasses, and change my ribbon of the Legion of Honor, for it is getting very dirty.' (He wears his orders in bed, you know.) So he was fully conscious, you see, quite in the possession of all his faculties and habitual ideas. But, pooh! ten minutes afterwards the water had gone up, up, up; up to his heart and into his lungs. He knew he was dying when he felt the cysts break. At that supreme moment he showed what he was—how strong his character, his intellect how vast! Ah! some of us did not appreciate him. We used to laugh at him; we took him for a dunce; for the veriest dunce, did we not, M. Godard?"

GODARD. "For my own part, nobody could have a higher opinion of M. de la Billardière's talents than I."

BIXIOU. "You understood each other."

GODARD. "After all, 'twas not a spiteful man. He never did anybody harm."

BIXIOU. "A man must do something if he is to do harm, and he never did anything. Then if it was not you that thought him hopelessly inept, it must have been Minard."

MINARD (*shrugging his shoulders*). "I?"

BIXIOU. "Well, then, it was you, Dutocq. (*As Dutocq makes signs of vehement protest.*) What? you none of you thought so? Good! Everybody here, it seems, took him for an intellectual Hercules? Very well, you were right; he made an end like a man of talent, an intelligent man, a great man, as he was, in fact."

DESROYS (*growing impatient*). "Gracious me! what has he done that is so extraordinary? Did he make confession?"

BIXIOU. "Yes, sir, and expressed a wish to receive the sacraments. But do you know how he received them? He had himself put into a court suit as Gentleman in Ordinary, he had all his orders, he even had his hair powdered; they tied up his queue (poor queue!) with a new ribbon (and it is only a man of some character, I can tell you, that can mind his p's and queues when he lies a-dying; there are eight of us

here, and not a single one of us could do it). And that is not all; you know that celebrated men always make a last 'speech'—that is the English word for a parliamentary gag—well, he said—what did he say now?—ah! yes; he said, 'I ought surely to put on my best to receive the King of Heaven, when I have so many times dressed within an inch of my life to pay my respects to an earthly sovereign!' Thus ended M. de la Billardière; he might have done it on purpose to justify the saying of Pythagoras that 'we never know men until they are dead.' "

COLLEVILLE (*coming in*). "At last, gentlemen, I have a famous piece of news for you——"

OMNES. "We know it."

COLLEVILLE. "I defy you to guess it! I have been at this ever since His Majesty's accession to the thrones of France and Navarre; and I finished it last night. It bothered me so much that Mme. Colleville wanted to know what it was that worried me so much."

DUTOCQ. "Do you suppose that anybody has time to think of your anagrams when the highly-respected M. de la Billardière has just died?"

COLLEVILLE. "I recognize Bixiou's hand. I have only just been to M. de la Billardière's; he was still alive, but he is not expected to last long." (*Godard discovers that he has been hoaxed, and goes back in disgust to his sanctum.*) "But, gentlemen, you would never guess the events that lie in that sacramental phrase" (*holds out a paper*), *"Charles Dix, par la grâce de Dieu, roi de France et de Navarre."*

GODARD (*coming back*). "Out with it at once, and do not waste their time."

COLLEVILLE (*triumphantly, displaying the folded end of the sheet*).

'A. H. V. il cedera
De S. C. l. d. partira
En nauf errera
Decede à Gorix.

"All the letters are there: 'To H. V.' (Henri V.) 'he will yield' (his crown, that is); 'From S. C. l. d.' (Saint Cloud) 'he will set forth; On a bark' (that means a boat, skiff, vessel, whatever you like, it is an old French word), 'on a bark he will wander abroad——' "

DUTOCQ. "What a tissue of absurdities! How do you make it out that the King will resign his crown to Henri V., who, on your showing, would be his grandson, when there is His Highness the Dauphin in between? You are prophesying the Dauphin's death anyhow."

BIXIOU. "What is Gorix? A cat's name?"

COLLEVILLE (*nettled*). "It is a lapidary's abbreviation of the name of a town, my dear friend; I looked it up in Malte-Brun. Gorix, the Latin *Gorixia,* is situated somewhere in Bohemia or Hungary; it is in Austria any way——"

BIXIOU (*interrupting*). "Tyrol, Basque provinces, or South America. You ought to have looked out an air at the same time so as to play it on the clarionet."

GODARD (*shrugging his shoulders as he goes*). "What rubbish!"

COLLEVILLE. "Rubbish! rubbish! I should be very glad if you would take the trouble to study fatalism, the religion of the Emperor Napoleon."

GODARD (*nettled by Colleville's tone*). "M. Colleville, Bonaparte may be styled 'Emperor' by historians, but in a Government office he ought not to be recognized in that character."

BIXIOU (*smiling*). "Find an anagram in that, my good friend. There! as for anagrams, I like your wife better. (*sotto voce*). She is easier to turn round.—Flavie really ought to make you chief clerk at some odd moment when she has time to spare, if it were only to put you out of reach of a Godard's stupidity——"

DUTOCQ (*coming to Godard's support*). "If it wasn't all rubbish, you might lose your place, for the things you prophesy are not exactly pleasant for the King; every good Royalist is bound to assume that when he has been twice in exile he has seen enough of foreign parts."

COLLEVILLE. "If they took away my post, François Keller would walk into your Minister" (*deep silence*). "Know, Master Dutocq, that every known anagram has been fulfilled. Look here! don't you marry, there is *coqu* in your name!"

BIXIOU. "And D T left over for 'detestable.'"

DUTOCQ (*not apparently put out*). "I would rather it went no further than my name."

PAULMIER (*aside to Desroys*). "Had you there, Master Colleville!"

DUTOCQ (*to Colleville*). "Have you done, *Xavier Rabourdin, chef de bureau*——"

COLLEVILLE. "Egad, I have."

BIXIOU (*cutting a pen*). "And what did you make out?"

COLLEVILLE. "It makes this: *D'abord rêva bureaux, E. U.* —Do you take it?—*Et il eut fin riche.* Which means that after beginning in the civil service he chucked it over to make his fortune somewhere else."

DUTOCQ. "It is funny, anyhow."

BIXIOU. "And *Isidore Baudoyer?*"

COLLEVILLE (*mysteriously*). "I would rather not tell anybody but Thullier."

BIXIOU. "Bet you a breakfast I will tell you what it is!"

COLLEVILLE. "I will pay if you find out."

BIXIOU. "Then you are going to stand treat; but don't be vexed, two artists such as you and I will die of laughing. *Isidore Baudoyer* gives *Ris d'aboyeur d'oie,* he laughs at the fellow that barks at a goose."

COLLEVILLE (*thunderstruck*). "You stole it!"

BIXIOU (*stiffly*). "M. Colleville, do me the honor to believe that I am so rich in folly that I have no need to steal from my neighbors."

BAUDOYER (*a letter-file in his hand*). "Talk just a little louder, gentlemen, I beg; you will bring the office into good odor. The estimable M. Clergeot, who did me the honor to come to ask for some information, has had the benefit of your conversation" (*goes to Godard's office*).

DUTOCQ (*aside to Bixiou*). "I have something to say to you."

Bixiou (*fingering Dutocq's waistcoat*). "You are wearing a neat waistcoat which cost you next to nothing, no doubt. Is that the secret?"

Dutocq. "What? Next to nothing? I never gave so much for a waistcoat before. The stuff costs six francs a yard at the big shop in the Rue de la Paix; it is a fine dull silk, just the thing for deep mourning."

Bixiou. "You understand prints, but you do not know the rules of etiquette. One cannot know everything. Silk is not the proper thing to wear in deep mourning. That is why I only wear wool myself. M. Rabourdin, M. Clergeot, and the Minister are all-wool; the Faubourg Saint-Germain is all-wool. Every one goes about in wool except Minard; he is afraid that people will take him for a sheep, styled *laniger* in rustical Latin; and on that pretext he dispensed with mourning for King Louis XVIII., a great legislator, a witty man, the author of the Charter, a king that will hold his own in history, as he held it everywhere else; for—do you know the finest touch of character in his life? No?—Well, then, when he received all the allied sovereigns at his second entry, he walked out first to table."

Paulmier (*looking at Dutocq*). "I do not see——"

Dutocq (*looking at Paulmier*). "No more do I."

Bixiou. "You do not understand? Well, then; he did not regard himself as at home in his own house. It was ingenious, great, epigrammatic! The allied sovereigns understood it no more than you do, even when they put their heads together to make it out. It is true that they were pretty nearly all of them strangers——"

Baudoyer (*in his assistant clerk's sanctum, where he has been conversing in an undertone beside the fire, while the talk went on outside*). "Yes, our worthy chief is breathing his last. Both Ministers are there to receive his latest sigh; my father-in-law has just been informed of the event. If you wish to do me a signal service, take a cabriolet and go to Mme. Baudoyer with the news; M. Saillard cannot leave his desk, and I dare not leave the office to look after itself. Put

yourself at Mme. Baudoyer's disposal; she has her own views, I believe, and might possibly wish to take several steps simultaneously" (*they go out together*).

GODARD. "M. Bixiou, I am leaving the office for the day, so will you take my place?"

BAUDOYER (*looking benignly at Bixiou*). "You might consult me should occasion require it."

BIXIOU. "This time, la Billardière is really dead!"

DUTOCQ (*whispers to Bixiou*). "Look here! Now is the time for coming to an understanding about getting on. Suppose that you are chief clerk and I assistant; what do you say?"

BIXIOU (*shrugging his shoulders*). "Come, no nonsense!"

DUTOCQ. "If Baudoyer gets the appointment, Rabourdin will not stay on; he will send in his resignation. Between ourselves, Baudoyer is so incompetent that if you and du Bruel will not help him he will be cashiered in two months' time. If I can put two and two together, we will have three vacant places ahead of us."

BIXIOU. "Three places that will be given away under our noses; they will go to swag-bellied toadies, flunkeys, spies, and men of the 'Congrégation'; to Colleville here, whose wife has gone the way of all pretty women, to—a devout ending."

DUTOCQ. "It will go to you, my dear fellow, if for once in your life you care to employ your wits *consistently*" (*stopping short to note the effect of the adverb upon his listener*). "Let us be open and above-board."

BIXIOU (*imperturbably*). "What is your game?"

DUTOCQ. "For my own part, I want to be chief clerk's assistant and nothing else. I know myself; I know that I have not the ability to be chief, and that you have. Du Bruel may get la Billardière's place, and then you would be chief clerk under him. He will leave you his berth when he has feathered his nest; and as for me, with you to protect me, I shall potter along till I get my pension."

BIXIOU. "Sly dog. But how do you mean to bring this

through? It is a matter of forcing a Minister's hand and spitting out a man of talent. Between ourselves, Rabourdin is the only man that is fit to take the division—the department, who knows? And you propose to put that square block of stupidity, that cube of incompetence, *La Place-Baudoyer,* in his stead?"

Dutocq (*bridling up*). "My dear fellow, I can set the whole place against Rabourdin? You know how Fleury loves him? Well and good, Fleury shall look down upon him."

Bixiou. "To be despised by Fleury!"

Dutocq. "Nobody will stand by him. The clerks will go in a body to the Minister to complain of him; and not our division only, but Clergeot's division and the Bois-Levants, all the departments in a mass."

Bixiou. "Just so; cavalry, infantry, artillery, and horse marines, all to the front! You are off your head, my dear fellow! And what have I, for one, to do in this?"

Dutocq. "Draw a cutting caricature, a thing that a man cannot get over."

Bixiou. "Are you going to pay for it?"

Dutocq. "A hundred francs."

Bixiou (*to himself*). "There is something in it, then."

Dutocq. "Rabourdin might be dressed as a butcher; but the likeness must be unmistakable. Find out points of resemblance between an office and a kitchen; put a larding-knife in Rabourdin's hand; draw a lot of poultry, give them the heads of the principal clerks in the department, and put them in a huge coop with 'Dispatch Department' written over it, and Rabourdin must be supposed to be cutting their throats one after another. There should be geese, you know, and ducks with faces like ours; just a sort of a likeness, you understand! Rabourdin ought to have a fowl in his hand—Baudoyer, for example, got up as a turkey."

Bixiou. "'Laughs at those that bark at a goose'" (*stares a long while at Dutocq*). "Did you think of this yourself?"

Dutocq. "Yes."

Bixiou (*to himself*). "Violent hatred and talent, it seems,

reach the same end!" (*To Dutocq*) "My dear fellow, I will do it" (*Dutocq starts with joy in spite of himself*) "if"—(*pause*)—"if I know whom I can look to to back me up; for if you do not succeed, I shall lose my berth, and I must live. And what is more, your good-nature is somewhat singular, my dear colleague."

DUTOCQ. "Well, do not make the drawing until success is plain to you——"

BIXIOU. "Why not make a clean breast of it at once?"

DUTOCQ. "I must scent out how things are in the offices first. We will talk of this again afterwards" (*goes*).

BIXIOU (*left standing by himself in the corridor*). "That stock-fish (for he is more like a fish than a man), that Dutocq has got hold of a good idea, I do not know where he found it. It would be funny if *La Place-Baudoyer* got la Billardière's place; it would be better than funny; we should get something by it." (*Goes back to the office*). "Gentlemen, some famous changes will be seen here directly; Daddy la Billardière is really dead this time. No humbug! Word of honor! There goes Godard post-haste on an errand for our revered chief Baudoyer, heir-presumptive to the late lamented!" (*Minard, Desroys, and Colleville raise their heads and drop their pens in astonishment; Colleville blows his nose.*) "Some of us will get a step! Colleville is going to be assistant clerk at least; Minard, perhaps, will be first draughting-clerk; why not? He is every bit as great a fool as I am. If you were raised to two thousand five hundred francs—hey, Minard!—your little wife would be finely pleased, and you might buy yourself a pair of boots."

COLLEVILLE. "But *you* have not two thousand five hundred francs yet."

BIXIOU. "M. Dutocq gets as much as that in the Rabourdins'. Why should not I within the year? So had M. Baudoyer——"

COLLEVILLE. "That was through M. Saillard's influence. Not a single draughting-clerk gets so much in Clergeot's division."

PAULMIER. "By the way! M. Cochin, may be, has not three thousand? He succeeded M. Vavasseur, and M. Vavasseur was here for ten years under the Empire on four thousand, he was cut down to three thousand on the first return of the Bourbons, and died on two thousand five hundred. But M. Cochin's brother's influence raised it, and so he gets three."

COLLEVILLE. "M. Cochin signs himself E. L. L. E. Cochin; his name is Emile Louis Lucien Emmanuel, and his anagram gives *Cochenille*. Well, and he became a partner in a drug business in the Rue des Lombards, and the firm of Matifat made money by speculating in that particular colonial product."

BIXIOU. "Matifat, poor man, he had a year of Florine."

COLLEVILLE. "Cochin sometimes comes to our parties, for he is a first-rate performer on the violin." (*To Bixiou, who has not begun to work*). "You ought to come to our concert next Tuesday. They will play a quartette by Reicha."

BIXIOU. "Thanks, I would rather look at the score."

COLLEVILLE. "Do you say that for a joke? For an artist of your attainments ought surely to be fond of music."

BIXIOU. "I am going, but it is for madame's sake."

BAUDOYER (*returning*). "M. Chazelle not here yet? Give him my compliments, gentlemen."

BIXIOU (*who had put a hat on Chazelle's place as soon as he heard Baudoyer's footsteps*). "Begging your pardon, sir, he has gone to make an inquiry of the Rabourdin's for you."

CHAZELLE (*coming in with his hat on his head, misses Baudoyer*). "Old la Billardière has gone out, gentlemen! Rabourdin is head of the division, and Master of Requests! He has fairly earned his step, he has!——"

BAUDOYER (*to Chazelle*). "You found the appointment in your second hat, sir, did you not?" (*pointing to the hat on Chazelle's desk*). "This is the third time this month that you have come in after nine o'clock; if you keep it up, you will get on, but in what sense remains to be seen." (*To Bixiou, who is reading the newspaper.*) "My dear M. Bixiou,

for pity's sake, leave the paper to these gentlemen (they are just going to take their breakfasts), and come and set about to-day's business. I do not know what M. Rabourdin does with Gabriel; he keeps him for his own private use, I suppose, for I have rung three times" (*disappears with Bixiou into Godard's office*).

CHAZELLE. "Cursed luck!"

PAULMIER (*delighted to tease Chazelle*). "So they did not tell you downstairs that he had gone up? Anyhow, could you not use your eyes when you came in, and see the hat on your desk, and that elephant——"

COLLEVILLE (*laughing*). "—In the menagerie."

PAULMIER. "You ought to have seen him—he is big enough."

CHAZELLE (*desperately*). "Egad! even if the Government pays us four francs seventy-five centimes per day, I do not see that we are slaves in consequence."

FLEURY (*coming in at the door*). "Down with Baudoyer! Long live Rabourdin! That is the cry all through the division."

CHAZELLE (*lashing himself into fury*). "Baudoyer is welcome to cashier me if he has a mind; I shall be no worse off than before. There are a thousand ways of earning five francs a day in Paris; you can make *that* at the Palais by copying for the lawyers——"

PAULMIER. "So you say, but a berth is a berth; and Colleville, that courageous fellow who works like a galley-slave after hours, and might make more than his salary if he lost his post by giving music lessons—he will keep his berth. Hang it all, a man does not throw up his chances."

CHAZELLE (*continuing his philippic*). "He may, not I. We haven't any chance to lose. Confound it! There was a time when nothing was more tempting than a career in the civil service; there were so many men in the army that they were wanted in the administration. The maimed and the halt, toothless old men, unhealthy fellows like Paulmier, and short-sighted people got on rapidly. The lycées swarmed

with boys, and families were dazzled with the brilliant prospect. A young fellow in spectacles wore a blue coat, and a red ribbon blazing at his button-hole, and drew a thousand or so of francs every month for spending a few hours every day at some office looking after something or other. He went late and came away early; he had hours of leisure like Lord Byron, and wrote novels; he strolled in the Tuileries Gardens with a bit of a swagger; he was on exhibition at balls and theatres and everywhere else; he was admitted into the best society; he spent his salary, returning to France all that France gave him, and even doing something in return. In those days, in fact, employés (like Thullier) were petted by pretty women; they were supposed to be intelligent, and by no means overworked themselves at the office. Empresses, queens, and princesses had their fancies in those happy days. All those noble ladies had the passion of noble natures—they loved to play the protector. So there was a chance of filling a high position in twenty-five years or so; you might be auditor to the Council of State; or a Master of Requests, and draw up reports for the Emperor, while you amused yourself with his august family. People used to work and play at the same time. Everything was done quickly. But nowadays, since the Chamber bethought itself of entering the expediture under separate items, and the heading 'Staff,' we are not even like private soldiers. It is a thousand to one if you get the smallest appointment, for there are a thousand sovereigns——"

Bixiou (*returning*). "Chazelle must be crazy. Where does he discover a thousand sovereigns? Are they by any chance in his pocket?——"

Chazelle. "Let us reckon them up! Four hundred at the further end of the Pont de la Concorde (so called because it leads to perpetual discord between the Right and the Left in the Chamber); three hundred more at the top of the Rue de Tournon. So the Court, which ought to count for three hundred, is obliged to have seven hundred times the Emperor's strength of will, if it means to give any place whatsoever by patronage——"

FLEURY. "Which all means that, if a clerk has no interest and no one to help him but himself in a country where there are three centres of power, the betting is a thousand to one that he will never get any further."

BIXIOU (*looking from Fleury to Chazelle*). "Aha! my children, you have yet to learn that to be in the service of the State is to be in the worst state of all——"

FLEURY. "Because there is a Constitutional Government."

COLLEVILLE. "Gentlemen, let us not talk politics."

BIXIOU. "Fleury is right. If you serve the State in these days, gentlemen, you do not serve a prince who rewards and punishes. The State is Anybody and Everybody. Now, Everybody cares for Nobody. If you serve Everybody, you serve Nobody; and Nobody cares about Anybody. A civil servant lives between these two negatives. The world is pitiless, heartless, brainless, and thoughtless; Everybody is selfish, Everybody forgets the services of yesterday. You are (like M. Baudoyer) an administrative genius from a most tender age; you are the Chateaubriand of reports, the Bossuet of circulars, the Canalis of memorials, the 'sublime child' of the dispatch—in vain! There is a disheartening law against administrative genius; the law of advancement on the average.

"That fatal average is worked out from the tables of the law of promotion and the tables of mortality. It is certain that if you enter any department whatsoever at the age of eighteen, you will not have a salary of eighteen hundred francs till you are thirty years old; if you are to get six thousand by the time you are fifty, Colleville's career proves that though you have a genius for a wife, and the support of various peers of France, and of divers influential deputies to boot, it profiteth you nothing. Let a young man have studied the humanities, let him be vaccinated, exempt from military service, and in full possession of his wits; well, there is no free and independent career in which, without a transcendent intellect, such a man could not put by a capital of forty-five thousand francs of centimes in the time. That

sum would bring in a yearly interest equal to our salary, and it would be a perpetual income; whereas our salaries are by their nature transitory, we have not even our berths, such as they are, for life. In the same time, a tradesman would have money put out to interest, and an independent income of ten thousand francs; he would have filed his schedule, or he would be a president of the commercial court. A painter would have covered a square mile of canvas with paint; he would either wear the Cross of the Legion of Honor, or set up for a neglected genius. A man of letters would be a professor of something or other; or a journalist, paid at the rate of a hundred francs for a thousand lines; or he is a *feuilletonniste,* or some fine day he is landed in Sainte-Pélagie for writing a humorous pamphlet which displeased the Jesuits; his value incontinently goes up tremendously, and the pamphlet makes a political personage of him. Indeed, your idler that never did anything in his life (for there are idlers that do something, and idlers that do nothing), your idler has made debts and found a widow to pay them. A priest has had time to become a bishop *in partibus.* A vaudevilliste is a landed proprietor, even if, like du Bruel, he never wrote a whole vaudeville by himself. If a steady, intelligent young fellow starts in the money-lending line with a very small capital (like Mlle. Thullier, for instance), he can buy a fourth of a stockbroker's connection in twelve years. Let us go lower down! A petty clerk becomes a notary; the ragpicker has a thousand crowns of independent income; the working man at worst has managed to set up for himself; whereas, in the midst of the rotatory movement of that civilization which takes infinite subdivision for progress, a Chazelle has been existing on twenty-two sous per head. He argues with his tailor and shoemaker, he is in debt; that's nothing—he is *cretinized!*—Come, gentlemen, one glorious movement; let us send in our resignations in a body, hey? Fleury and Chazelle, make a plunge into a new line, and become great men in it!——"

CHAZELLE (*calming down under Bixiou's discourse*). "Thanks" (*general laughter*).

BIXIOU. "You are wrong. In your position I would be beforehand with the Secretary-General."

CHAZELLE (*uneasily*). "Why, what has he to say to me?"

BIXIOU. "Odry would tell you, Chazelle, with more charm in the manner of the telling than des Lupeaulx will put into the observation, that the one place open to you is the Place de la Concorde."

PAULMIER (*clasping the stove-pipe*). "Egad! Baudoyer will not have pity on you, that is certain!"

FLEURY. "Another thing to put up with from Baudoyer. Now, there's a queer fish for you! Talk of M. Rabourdin—there is a man! The work he put on my table to-day would take three days in this office, but he will have it by four o'clock this afternoon. But *he* is not always at my heels to stop my chat with friends."

BAUDOYER (*returning*). "Gentlemen, if anybody has a right to find fault with the parliamentary system or the proceedings of the administration, you must admit that this is not the proper place for such talk." (*To Fleury*) "Why are you here, sir?"

FLEURY (*insolently*). "To advise these gentlemen of a general move! The Secretary-General has sent for du Bruel; Dutocq has gone too. Everybody is wondering about the appointment."

BAUDOYER (*returning*). "That, sir, is no business of yours. Go back to your office, and do not upset mine."

FLEURY (*from the doorway*). "It would be tremendously unfair if Rabourdin were to be done out of it. My word! I would leave the service." (*Comes back.*) "Did you make out your anagram, Daddy Colleville?"

COLLEVILLE. "Yes, here it is."

FLEURY (*leaning over Colleville's desk*). "Famous! famous! It will be sure to happen if the Government keeps to its hypocritical line." (*Gives warning to the others that Baudoyer is listening.*) "If the Government openly stated its intentions without an afterthought, then the Liberals would see what they would have to do. But when a Govern-

ment sets its best friends against it, and sends such men as Chateaubriand and Royer-Collard and the *Débats* into opposition, it makes you sorry to see it."

COLLEVILLE (*after a look round at his fellow-clerks*). "Look here, Fleury, you are a good fellow, but you must not talk politics here. You do us more harm than you know."

FLEURY (*drily*). "Good-day, gentlemen. I will go to my copying." (*Comes back and speaks to Bixiou in an undertone.*) "They say that Mme. Colleville is making allies among the Congrégation."

BIXIOU. "In what way?——"

FLEURY (*breaking into a laugh*). "You are never to be caught napping!"

COLLEVILLE (*uneasily*). "What are you saying?"

FLEURY. "Our theatre took a thousand crowns yesterday with the new piece, though this is the fortieth representation. You ought to come and see it. The scenery is something superb."

Meanwhile, des Lupeaulx was giving du Bruel audience in the secretary's rooms; and Dutocq had followed du Bruel. Des Lupeaulx's man brought the news of M. de la Billardière's death, and the Secretary-General intended to please both Ministers by inserting an obituary notice in that evening's paper.

"Good-day, my dear du Bruel," was the semi-minister's greeting, as he saw the clerk enter, and left him to stand. "You know the news? La Billardière is dead; the two Ministers were present when he took the sacrament. The old man strongly recommended Rabourdin; said that he could not die easy unless he knew that his successor was to be the man who had filled his place all along. It would seem that the death-agony is like the 'question,' and everything comes out. . . . The Minister is so much the more pledged to this course because it is his intention, and the intention of the Board likewise, to reward M. Rabourdin's numerous services" (wagging his head)—"the Council of State desires the benefit of his lights. They say that M. de la Billardière is

to be transferred to the Seals, which is as good as if the King had made him a present of a hundred thousand francs—the place is like a notary's connection, and may be sold. That piece of news will be received with joy in your division, for they might imagine that Benjamin would be put in there.—Du Bruel, some one ought to knock off ten or a dozen lines about the old boy, by way of a news item. It will come under the notice of their Excellencies." "Do you know all about old la Billardière?" he added, taking up the papers.

Du Bruel made a gesture to signify that he knew nothing.

"No?" returned des Lupeaulx. "Oh, well, he was mixed up in the la Vendée business; he was in the late King's confidence. Like M. le Comte de la Fontaine, he never would come to terms with the First Consul. He did a little in Chouannerie. He was born in Brittany of a parliamentary family; but their dignities were so recent that he was ennobled by Louis XVIII. See—how old was he now? Never mind. Just put it properly something this way: 'A loyalty that never swerved, an enlightened piety'—(the poor old boy had a craze for never setting foot in a church). Give him out for a pious servant of the Crown. Lead up nicely to the remark that he might have sung the Song of Simeon over the accession of Charles X.—The Comte d'Artois had a great esteem for him, for la Billardière unfortunately co-operated with him in the Quiberon affair, and took all the blame upon himself; you know, of course. . . . La Billardière justified the King in a pamphlet which he wrote to refute an impertinent History of the Revolution got up by some journalist. So you can lay stress on the devotion. Finally, weigh your words well, so that the other papers may not laugh at us, and bring me the article. Were you at Rabourdin's yesterday?"

"Yes, my lord," said du Bruel, "that is—I beg pardon——"

"There is no harm done," des Lupeaulx answered, laughing.

"His wife is delightfully pretty," continued du Bruel. "There are not two such women in Paris. There are women

as clever, but they are not so charming in their cleverness; and there may be a woman as handsome as Célestine, but scarcely one so various in her beauty. Mme. Rabourdin is far superior to Mme. Colleville!" added du Bruel, for he remembered an old story about des Lupeaulx. "Flavie is what she is, thanks to her intercourse with men, while Mme. Rabourdin owes everything to herself; she knows everything; you could not tell a secret in Latin before her. I should think that nothing was beyond my reach if I had such a wife."

"You have more brains than an author's allowance," returned des Lupeaulx in a thrill of gratified vanity. And turning his head, he saw Dutocq.

"Oh! good-day, Dutocq. I sent to ask if you would lend me your Charlet, if it is complete. The Countess knows nothing of Charlet."

Du Bruel withdrew.

"Why do you come when you are not called?" des Lupeaulx asked in a hard voice, when they were alone. "Why do you come to me at ten o'clock, just as I am about to breakfast with His Excellency? Is the Government in danger?"

"Perhaps, sir. If I had had the honor of an interview with you this morning, you certainly would not have pronounced the Sieur Rabourdin's panegyric after you had read what he has written of you."

Dutocq unbuttoned his greatcoat, and took out a quire of paper, with an impression on the side of the sheets. He laid them down on des Lupeaulx's desk and pointed to a paragraph. Then he bolted the door, as though he feared an explosion. This was what the Secretary-General read against his name:—

"M. des Lupeaulx.—A Government lowers itself by employing such a man openly. His proper place is in the diplomatic police. Such a person may be pitted with success against the political buccaneers of other cabinets. It would be a pity to put him into the ordinary police. . . . He stands above the level of the common spy; he can grasp a

scheme, he could carry out a necessary bit of dirty work successfully, and cover his retreat with skill," and so forth and so forth. Des Lupeaulx's character was succinctly analyzed in five or six sentences. Rabourdin gave the gist of the biographical sketch at the beginning of this history.

At the first words the Secretary-General knew that he had been weighed and found wanting by an abler man; but he determined to reserve himself for a further examination into a piece of work which went both high and far, without admitting such a man as Dutocq into his confidence. The Secretary-General, like barristers, magistrates, diplomates, and others, was obliged to explore the human heart; like them too, he was astonished at nothing. He was accustomed to treachery, to the snares set by hate, to traps of all kinds. He could receive a stab in the back without a change of countenance. So it was a calm and grave countenance that des Lupeaulx turned upon the office spy.

"How did you get hold of this document?" he asked.

Dutocq gave the history of his good luck; but des Lupeaulx's face showed no sign of approval while he listened. Consequently the story begun in high triumph was ended in fear and trembling.

"You have put your finger between the tree and the bark, Dutocq," was the Secretary-General's dry comment. "Observe the utmost secrecy as to this affair, unless you want to make very powerful enemies; it is a work of the greatest importance, and I have cognizance of it."

And des Lupeaulx dismissed Dutocq with a glance of a kind which speaks more than words.

Dutocq was dismayed to find a rival in his chief. "Aha!" he said to himself, "so that scoundrel of a Rabourdin is in it too. He is a staff-officer, while I am a private soldier. I would not have believed it."

So to all his previous motives for detesting Rabourdin, was added another and most cogent reason for hate—the jealousy that one workman feels of another in the same trade.

When des Lupeaulx was left alone his meditations took a

singular turn. Rabourdin was an instrument in the hands of some power; what power was it? Should he profit by this surprising document to ruin the man? Or should he use it the better to succeed with the man's wife? The mystery was perfectly obscure. Des Lupeaulx turned the pages in dismay. The men whom he knew were summed up with unheard-of sagacity. He admired Rabourdin, while he felt the stab to the heart. He was still reading when breakfast was announced.

"You will keep His Excellency waiting if you do not go down at once," the Minister's footman came to say.

The Minister breakfasted with his wife and children and des Lupeaulx. There were no servants in the room. The morning meal is the one moment of home life that a statesman can snatch from the all-absorbing demands of public business; but in spite of the barriers raised with ingenious care, so that one hour may be given up entirely to the family and the affections, many intruders, great and small, find ways of breaking in upon it. Public business, as at this moment, often comes athwart their enjoyment.

"I thought Rabourdin was above the ordinary level of clerks; and lo and behold! ten minutes after la Billardière's death, he takes it into his head to send me a regular stage billet through la Brière," said the Minister, and he held out the sheet of paper which he was twisting in his fingers.

Rabourdin had written the note before he heard of M. de la Billardière's death through la Brière; he was too noble-minded to think of the base construction that might be put upon it, and allowed la Brière to retain and deliver the missive. Des Lupeaulx read as follows:—

"Monseigneur,—If twenty-three years of irreproachable service may merit a favor, I entreat Your Excellency to grant me an audience this very day. It is a matter in which my honor is involved," and the note ended with the usual respectful formulas.

"Poor man!" said des Lupeaulx, in a pitying tone, which left the Minister still under a misapprehension; "we are by ourselves, let him come. You go to the Council after the House rises, and Your Excellency is bound to give an answer to the Opposition to-day; this is the only time that you can give him——"

Des Lupeaulx rose, sent for the usher, said a word to him, and came back to the table.

"I am adjourning him to the dessert," said he.

His Excellency, like most other ministers under the Restoration, was past his youth. The Charter granted by Louis XVIII., unluckily, tied the King's hands; he was forced to give the destinies of the country over to quadragenarians of the Chamber of Deputies and peers of seventy. A king had not power to look wheresoever he would for an able political leader, and to put him forward in spite of his youth or poverty. Napoleon, and Napoleon alone, might employ young men if he chose; no considerations led him to pause. And so it fell out that since the fall of that mighty Will, energy had deserted authority. And in France, of all countries in the world, the contrast between slackness and vigor is a dangerous one. As a rule, the minister who comes into power late in life, is a mediocrity; while young ministers have been the glory of European kingdoms and Republics. The world is ringing yet with the contest between Pitt and Napoleon; and they, like Henri IV., like Richelieu, Mazarin, Colbert, Louvois, the Prince of Orange, the Duc de Guise, Francesco della Rovere, and Machiavelli, like all great statesmen, in short, whether they come of low origin or are born to a throne, began to govern at an early age. The Convention, that model of energy, was in great part composed of young heads; and no sovereign can afford to forget that the Convention brought fourteen armies into the field against Europe; the policy that brought about such disastrous results for absolute power (as it is called) was none the less dictated by true monarchical principles, and the Convention bore itself as a great king.

After ten or twelve years of parliamentary strife, after going again and again over the same ground till he grew jaded, this particular minister had been, in truth, put in office by a party which regarded him as its man of business. Fortunately for him, he was nearer sixty than fifty years old; if he had shown any signs of youthful energy, he would have come promptly to grief. But being accustomed to give way, to beat a retreat, and return to the charge, he could stand against the blows dealt him by all and sundry, by the Opposition or by his own side, by the Court or the clergy; opposing to it all the *vis inertiæ* of a soft but unyielding substance. In short, he enjoyed the advantages of his misfortune. Like some old barrister that has pleaded every conceivable cause, he had passed through the fire on countless questions of Government, till his mind no longer retained the keen edge preserved by the solitary thinker; and he lacked that faculty of making prompt decisions, which is acquired early in a life of action, and more especially in a military career. How should he have been other than he was? All his life long he had juggled with questions instead of using his own judgment upon them; he had criticised effects without going into the causes; and besides, and above all this, his head was full of the endless reforms which a party thrusts upon its leader; he was burdened with programmes designed to gain the private ends of various personages; for if an orator has a future before him, he is sure to be embarrassed with all kinds of impracticable schemes and unpractical advice. So far from starting fresh, the minister was jaded and tired with marches and counter-marches. And when at last he reached the long-desired heights, he found his paths beset with thorns on every side, and a thousand contrary dispositions to be reconciled. If the statesmen of the Restoration could but have followed out their own ideas, their capacities would no doubt be less exposed to criticism; but while their wills were overruled, their age was the salvation of them; they were physically incapable of contending, as younger men would have done, with low intrigue in high

places, intrigues which sometimes proved too much even for the strength of a Richelieu. To such knavery in a lower sphere Rabourdin was about to fall a victim. To the throes of early struggles succeeded the throes of office, for men not so much old as aged before the time. And so, just as they needed the keen sight of the eagle, their eyes were growing dim; and their faculties were exhausted when their work called for redoubled vigor.

The Minister to whom Rabourdin meant to confide his scheme was accustomed to hear the most ingenious theories propounded to him daily by men of unquestioned ability; schemes more or less applicable, or inapplicable, to public business in France were brought continually before his eyes. Their promoters had not the remotest conception of the difficulties of general policy; they used to waylay the Minister on his return from a pitched battle in the House, or a struggle with folly behind the scenes at Court; they assailed him on the eve of a wrestling-bout with public opinion, or on the morrow of some diplomatic question on which the Cabinet had split in three. A statesman thus situated naturally has a gag ready to apply at the first hint of an improvement in the established order of things. Daring speculators and men from behind the scenes in politics or finance were not wont to meet round a dinner-table in those days to sum up the opinions of the Stock Exchange and the Money Market, together with some utterance let fall by Diplomacy, in one profound saying. The Minister had, however, a sort of privy council in his private secretary and secretary-general; they chewed the cud of reflection, and controlled and analyzed the interests that spoke through so many insinuating voices.

It was the Minister's unfortunate habit (the invariable habit of sexagenarian ministers) to shuffle out of difficulties. No question was fairly faced; the Government was quietly trying to gag journalism instead of striking openly; it was evading the financial question; temporizing with the clergy as with the National Property difficulty, with Liberalism as with the control of the Chamber. Now as the Minister in

seven years had outflanked the powers that be, he considered that he could come round every question in the same way. It was natural that a man should try to keep his position by continuing to use the methods by which he rose; so natural, that nobody ventured to criticise a system devised by mediocrity to please mediocrity. The Restoration (like the Revolution in Poland) clearly showed how much a great man is worth to a nation, and what happens if he is not forthcoming. The last and greatest defect of the Restoration statesmen was their honesty, for their opponents availed themselves of slander and lies and all the resources of political rascality, until, by the most subversive methods, they let loose the unintelligent masses; and the large body of the people are quick to grasp but one idea—the idea of riot.

All this Rabourdin had told himself. Still, he had decided to hazard all to win all, much as a jaded gamester agrees with himself to try but one more throw; and fate, meanwhile, sent him a trickster for his opponent in the shape of des Lupeaulx. And yet, however sagacious Rabourdin might be, he was better skilled in administrative work than in parliamentary perspective. He did not imagine the whole truth; it had not occurred to him that the great practical work of his life was about to become a theory for the Minister, or that a statesman would inevitably class him with after-dinner innovators and armchair reformers.

His Excellency had just risen from table. He was thinking not of Rabourdin, but of François Keller. His wife detained him by offering him a bunch of grapes, when the chief clerk was announced. Des Lupeaulx had reckoned upon this preoccupied mood; he knew that His Excellency's mind would be taken up by his "extempore" speeches; so, seeing that the Minister was engaged in a discussion with his wife, the Secretary-General came forward. Rabourdin was thunderstruck by the first words.

"We, His Excellency and I, have been informed of the work in which you are engaged," said des Lupeaulx, lowering his voice; "you have nothing to fear from Dutocq, or

from any one whatever," he added, speaking the last few words aloud.

"Do not worry yourself in any way, Rabourdin," His Excellency said kindly, but he made as though he would retreat.

Rabourdin came forward respectfully, and the Minister could not choose but remain.

"Will Your Excellency condescend to permit me to say a few words in private?" said Rabourdin, with a significant glance.

The Minister looked at the clock, then he went towards a window, and Rabourdin followed him.

"When may I have the honor of submitting the affair to Your Excellency, so that I may explain the scheme of administration to which that paper relates? It is sure to be used to sully——"

"A scheme of administration," the Minister broke in, knitting his brows as he spoke. "If you have anything of the kind to lay before me, wait till the day when we work together. I have to attend the Council to-day, and I must make a reply to a question raised by the Opposition yesterday just before the House rose. Next Friday is your day; we did no work yesterday, for I had no time to attend to the business of the department. Political affairs stood in the way of purely administrative business."

"I leave my honor with confidence in Your Excellency's hands," Rabourdin answered gravely, "and I beg of you to remember that I was not permitted to offer an explanation of the missing document at once——"

"Why, you need fear nothing," broke in des Lupeaulx, as he came between them; "you are sure of your nomination in a week's time——"

The Minister began to laugh; he remembered des Lupeaulx's enthusiasm over Mme. Rabourdin, and looked slyly at his wife. The Countess smiled. This by-play surprised Rabourdin; he wondered what it meant; for a moment he ceased to hold the Minister with his eye, and His Excellency took the opportunity of escape.

"We will have a chat together over all this," said des Lupeaulx, when Rabourdin, not without bewilderment, found himself alone with the Secretary-General. "But do not bear malice against Dutocq; I will answer for him."

"Mme. Rabourdin is a charming woman," put in the Countess, for the sake of saying something.

The children gazed curiously at the visitor. Rabourdin had been prepared for a great ordeal; now he felt as if he were a big fish taken in the toils of a fine net. He struggled with himself.

"Mme. la Comtesse is very kind," he said.

"May I not have the pleasure of seeing you on one of my Fridays?" continued the lady; "bring your wife to us, you will do me a favor——"

"That is Mme. Rabourdin's night," put in des Lupeaulx, knowing what official Fridays were like; "but since you are so good, you are giving a small evening party soon, I believe——"

The Minister's wife seemed annoyed.

"You are the master of the ceremonies," she said, addressing des Lupeaulx as she rose.

In those ambiguous words she expressed her vexation; des Lupeaulx was intruding guests upon one of her small parties, to which none but a select few were admitted. Then, with a bow to Rabourdin, she went, and des Lupleaux and the chief clerk were left alone in the little breakfast-room. Des Lupeaulx was crumpling a bit of paper between his fingers; Rabourdin recognized his own confidential note.

"You do not really know me," the Secretary-General began with a smile. "On Friday evening we will come to a thorough understanding. I am bound to give audience now; the Minister is putting everything on my shoulders to-day, for he is preparing for the Chamber. But, Rabourdin, you have nothing to fear, I repeat."

Slowly Rabourdin made his way downstairs. He was bewildered by the unexpected turn that things were taking. He believed that Dutocq had denounced him; he was not mis-

taken; the list in which des Lupeaulx was so severely criticised was now in the hands of that worthy, and yet des Lupeaulx was flattering his judge. It was hopelessly bewildering. Straightforward people find it hard to see their way through a maze of intrigue, and Rabourdin lost himself in a labyrinth of conjecture, but failed to understand the Secretary-General's game.

"Either he has not read the article upon himself, or he is in love with my wife."

These words were the thoughts that brought him to a stand as he crossed the courtyard; and the glance exchanged between Célestine and des Lupeaulx, and intercepted last night, flashed like lightning upon his memory.

During Rabourdin's absence his office had, of course, suffered from a sudden accession of vehement excitement; the relations between the upper powers and subordinates are very much laid down by rule; and great, therefore, was the comment when an usher appeared from His Excellency to ask for the chief clerk, especially as he came at an hour when ministers are invisible. As this extraordinary communication coincided, moreover, with the death of M. de la Billardière, it seemed peculiarly significant to M. Saillard when he heard of it through M. Clergeot. He went to confer with his son-in-law. Bixiou happened to be working with his chief at the time; he left Baudoyer with his relative and betook himself to the Rabourdins. Work was suspended.

Bixiou (*coming in*). "You are taking things coolly here, gentlemen! You don't know what is going on downstairs. *La Vertueuse Rabourdin* is in for it; yes, cashiered! A painful scene with the Minister."

Dutocq (*looking at Bixiou*). "Is that a fact?"

Bixiou. "Who will be any the worse? Not you for one; du Bruel will be chief clerk, and you his assistant. M. Baudoyer will be head of the division."

Fleury. "I'll bet a hundred francs that Baudoyer will never be head of the division."

Vimeux. "Will you join us, M. Poiret, and take the bet?"

POIRET. "I get my pension on the 1st of January."

BIXIOU. "What, shall we never more behold your shoe-laces! What will the department do without you? Who will take my bet?——"

DUTOCQ. "Not I; I should be betting on a certainty. M. Rabourdin is nominated. M. de la Billardière, on his death-bed, recommended him to the two ministers, and said that he had drawn the pay while Rabourdin did all the work. He had scruples of conscience; so, subject to orders from above, they promised to nominate Rabourdin to ease his mind."

BIXIOU. "Gentleman, all of you take my wager; there are seven of you, for you will be one, M. Phellion. I bet you a dinner of five hundred francs at the *Rocher de Cancale* that Rabourdin will not get la Billardière's place. It won't cost you a hundred francs apiece, whereas I risk five hundred. I'll take you single-handed, in short. Does that suit? Will you go in, du Bruel?"

PHELLION (*laying down his pen*). "On what, môsieur, does your contingent proposition depend? for contingent it is! but I err in using the word 'proposition,' I mean to say 'contract.' A wager constitutes a contract."

FLEURY. "No, you can't call it a contract, the Code does not recognize a wager; you can't take action to enforce it."

DUTOCQ. "The Code recognizes it if it makes provision against it."

BIXIOU. "Well put, Dutocq, my boy."

POIRET. "Indeed!"

FLEURY. "That is right. It is as if you refuse to pay your debts, you admit them."

THUILLIER. "Famous jurisconsults you would make!"

POIRET. "I am as curious as M. Phellion to know what M. Bixiou's bet is about——"

BIXIOU (*shouts across the office*). "Du Bruel! are you going in?"

DU BRUEL (*showing himself*). "Fiddle-de-dee! gentlemen, I have something difficult to do; I have to draw up the

announcement of M. de la Billardière's death. For mercy's sake, a little quiet; you had better laugh and bet afterwards."

THUILLIER. "Better bet! you are infringing on my puns."

BIXIOU (*going into du Bruel's office*). "The old boy's panegyric is a very hard thing to write, du Bruel, and that is a fact; I would sooner have made a caricature of him."

DU BRUEL. "Do help me, Bixiou."

BIXIOU.—"I am quite willing, though this sort of thing is easier to do after dinner."

DU BRUEL. "We will dine together." (*Reads.*) "'Every day Religion and the Monarchy lose some one of those who fought for them in the time of the Revolution——'"

BIXIOU. "Bad. I should put—'Death is particularly busy among the oldest champions of the Monarchy and the most faithful servants of a King, whose heart bleeds at each fresh blow.'" (*Du Bruel writes hastily.*) "'M. le Baron Flamet de la Billardière died this morning of dropsy on the chest, brought on by heart complaint . . .' You see, it is of some consequence to prove that a man in a government office has a heart; you might slip in a little padding about the emotions of Royalists during the Terror, eh? It would not be amiss. Yet—no. The minor newspapers would be saying that the emotions struck not the heart, but regions lower down. We won't mention it.—What have you put?"

DU BRUEL (*reads*). "'A scion of an old parliamentary stock——'"

BIXIOU. "Very good! That is poetical, and *stock* is profoundly true."

DU BRUEL (*continues*). "'—in whom devotion to the throne, no less than attachment to the faith of our fathers, was handed down from generation to generation; M. de la Billardière——'"

BIXIOU. "I should put 'M. le Baron.'"

DU BRUEL. "But he wasn't a baron in 1793."

BIXIOU. "It is all one. Don't you know that Fouché, in the time of the Empire, was once telling an anecdote of the

Convention and Robespierre; and in the course of it he said, 'Robespierre said to me, "*Duc d'Otrante,* go to the Hôtel de Ville!" '—so there is a precedent."

Du Bruel. "Just let me jot that down! But we must not put 'the Baron' here; I am keeping all the favors the King showered upon him for the end."

Bixiou. "Ah! right—it is the dramatic effect, the curtain picture of the article."

Du Bruel. "It comes here, do you see?—'By raising M. de la Billardière to the rank of Baron, by appointing him Gentleman in Ordinary——' "

Bixiou (*aside*). "Very ordinary."

Du Bruel. "'—of the Bedchamber, etc., His Majesty rewarded the services of the provost who tempered a rigorous performance of his duty with the habitual mildness of the Bourbons, and the courage of a Vendean who did not bow the knee to the Imperial idol. M. de la Billardière leaves a son who inherits his devotion and his talents,' and so on and so on."

Bixiou. "Aren't you coming it rather too strong? Isn't the coloring too rich? There is that poetical flight 'the Imperial idol' and 'bowing the knee'; I should tone it down a bit. Hang it all! Vaudevilles spoil your hand, till you cannot write pedestrian prose. *I* should put—'He belonged to the small number of those who,' etc. Simplify; you have a simpleton to deal with."

Du Bruel. "There is another joke for a vaudeville! You would make your fortune at writing for the stage, Bixiou!"

Bixiou. "What have you put about Quiberon?" (*Reads.*) "That is not the thing! This is how I should draft it—'In a work recently published, he took all the responsibility of the misfortunes of the Quiberon expedition upon himself, thus giving the measure of a devotion which shrank from no sacrifice.'—That is neat and ingenious, and you save la Billardière's character."

Du Bruel. "But at the expense of whom?"

Bixiou (*serious as a priest in a pulpit*). "Of Hoche and Tallien, of course. Why, don't you know your history?"

Du Bruel. "No. I have subscribed to the Baudoins' collection, but I have not had time to look into it: there are no subjects for vaudevilles."

Phellion (*in the doorway*). "M. Bixiou, we should all like to know what it is that can induce you to believe that M. Rabourdin will not be nominated as head of the division, when the virtuous and worthy M. Rabourdin has taken the responsibility of the division for nine months, and stands first in order of seniority in the departments; and the Minister no sooner comes back from M. de la Billardière's than he sends the usher to fetch him."

Bixiou. "Daddy Phellion, do you know geography?"

Phellion (*swelling visibly*). "So I flatter myself, sir."

Bixiou. "History?"

Phellion (*modestly*). "Perhaps."

Bixiou (*looking at him*). "Your diamond is not properly set; it will drop out directly.—Well, you know nothing of human nature; you have gone no further in that study than in your explorations of the suburbs of Paris."

Poiret (*in a low voice to Vimeux*). "Suburbs of Paris! I thought that we were talking about M. Rabourdin."

Bixiou. "Does Rabourdin's office in a body take my bet?"

Omnes. "Yes."

Bixiou. "Du Bruel, are you going in?"

Du Bruel. "I should think so! It is to our interest that our chief clerk should be head of the division, for all the rest of us go up a step."

Thuillier. "We all go *a-head!*" (*Aside to Phellion*). "That was neat."

Bixiou. "I bet he won't; and for this reason. You will hardly understand it; but I will tell you why, all the same. It is right and fair that M. Rabourdin should get the appointment (*looks at Dutocq*); for seniority, ability, and probity are recognized, appreciated, and rewarded in his person. Besides, it is, of course, to the interest of the administration to appoint him." (*Phellion, Poiret, and Thuillier, listening without comprehending a word, look as though they were try-*

ing to see through darkness.) "Well, because the appointment is deserved and so suitable in all these ways, I (knowing all the while how wise and just the measure is) will bet that it will not be taken. No; it will end in failure, like the Boulogne and Russian expeditions, though genius had left nothing undone to ensure success. I am playing the devil's game."

Du Bruel. "But whom else can they appoint?"

Bixiou. "The more I think of Baudoyer, the more plainly it appears that in the matter of qualifications for the post he is the exact opposite of Rabourdin. Consequently, *he* will be head of the division."

Dutocq (*driven to extremities*). "But M. des Lupeaulx sent for me this morning to ask for my Charlet; and he told me that M. Rabourdin had just been nominated, and young la Billardière was to be transferred to the Audit Office."

Bixiou. "Appointed! appointed! The nomination will not be so much as signed for ten days to come. They will make the appointment for New Year's Day. There, look at your chief down there in the courtyard, and tell me if *La Vertueuse Rabourdin* looks like a man in favor! Any one would think he had been cashiered." (*Fleury rushes to the window.*) "Good-day, gentlemen. I am just going to announce the nomination to M. Baudoyer; it will infuriate him, at any rate, the holy man! And then I will tell him about our bet, to hearten him up again. That is what we call a *peripateia* on the stage, is it not, du Bruel?—What does it matter to me? If I win, he will take me for assistant clerk?" (*goes out.*)

Poiret. "Everybody says that that gentleman is clever; well, for my own part, I never can make anything out of his talk" (*writing as he speaks*). "I listen and listen, I hear words, and cannot grasp any sense in them. He brings in the suburbs of Paris when he is talking about human nature; then he begins with the Boulogne and Russian expeditions, and says that he is playing the Devil's game." (*Lays down his pen and goes to the stove.*) "First of all, you must

assume that the Devil gambles, then find out what game he plays! First of all, there is the game of dominoes——" (*blows his nose.*)

FLEURY (*interrupting him*). "Old Poiret is blowing his nose; it is eleven o'clock."

DU BRUEL. "So it is!—Already! I am off to the secretary's office."

POIRET. "Where am I?"

THUILLIER. "*Domino,* which is 'to the lord'; for you were talking of the Devil, and the Devil is a suzerain without a charter. But this is not so much a pun as a play on words. Anyhow, I see no difference between a play on words and——"

(*Sébastien comes in to collect circulars to be checked and signed.*)

VIMEUX. "Here you are, my fine fellow! Your time of trial is over; you will be established! M. Rabourdin will get the appointment. You were at Mme. Rabourdin's party yesterday. How lucky you are to go to that house! They say that very handsome women go there."

SÉBASTIEN. "I do not know."

FLEURY. "Are you blind?"

SÉBASTIEN. "I am not at all fond of looking at things when I cannot have them!"

PHELLION (*delighted*). "Well said, young man."

VIMEUX. "You surely look at Mme. Rabourdin. Why, hang it all! a charming woman."

FLEURY. "Pooh! a thin figure. I have seen her at the Tuileries Gardens. Percilliée, Ballet's mistress and Castaing's victim, is much more to my taste."

PHELLION. "But what has an actress to do with a chief clerk's wife?"

DUTOCQ. "Both are playing a comedy."

FLEURY (*looking askance at Dutocq*). "The physical has nothing to do with the moral; and if by that you understand——"

DUTOCQ. "For my own part, I understand nothing."

FLEURY. "Which of us will be chief clerk? who wants to know?"

OMNES. "Tell us!"

FLEURY. "It will be Colleville."

THUILLIER. "Why?"

FLEURY. "Mme. Colleville has finally taken the shortest way—through the sacristy."

THUILLIER (*drily*). "I am too much M. Colleville's friend, M. Fleury, not to beg of you to refrain from speaking lightly of his wife."

PHELLION. "Women, who have no way of defending themselves, should never be the subject of our conversations——"

VIMEUX. "And so much the less, since pretty Mme. Colleville would not ask Fleury to her house; so he blackens her character by way of revenge."

FLEURY. "She would not receive me on the same footing as Thuillier, but I went——"

THUILLIER. "When? Where? Under her windows?"

Fleury's swagger made him so formidable a person in the office, that every one was surprised when he took Thuillier's last word. His resignation had its source in a bill for two hundred francs with a tolerably doubtful signature, which document Thuillier was to present to his sister. A deep silence succeeded to the skirmish. Everybody worked from one o'clock till three. Du Bruel did not come back.

Towards half-past three preparations for departure were made—brushing of hats and changing of coats went on simultaneously all through the department. The cherished half-hour thus spent on small domestic cares shortened the working day by precisely thirty minutes. The temperature of overheated rooms fell several degrees; the odor peculiar to offices evaporated; silence settled down once more; and by four o'clock none were left but the real workers, the clerks who took their duties in earnest. A Minister may know the men that do the work of the department by making a round thereof punctually at four o'clock; but such great and serious persons never by any chance indulge in espionage of this kind.

At that hour divers chief clerks met each other in the courtyard and exchanged their ideas on the day's events. Generally speaking, as they walked off by twos and threes, the opinion was in favor of Rabourdin; but a few old stagers, such as M. Clergeot, would shake their heads with a *"Habent sua sidera lites."* Saillard and Baudoyer were courteously avoided. Nobody knew quite what to say to them about Billardière's death, and everybody felt that Baudoyer might want the berth though he had no right to it.

When the last-named pair had left the buildings some distance behind, Saillard broke silence with, "This is not going well for you, my poor Baudoyer."

"I fail to understand what Elizabeth is thinking about," returned his son-in-law. "She sent Godard post-haste for a passport for Falleix. Godard said that, acting on Uncle Mitral's advice, she hired a post-chaise, and Falleix is on the way back to his own country at this moment."

"Something connected with the business, no doubt," said Saillard.

"The most urgent business for us just now is to find a way of getting M. de la Billardière's place."

They had come along the Rue Saint-Honoré, till by this time they had reached the Palais Royal. Dutocq came up and raised his hat.

"If I can be of any use to you, sir, under the circumstances, pray command me," he said, addressing Baudoyer. "I am not less devoted than M. Godard to your interests."

"Such an overture is, at any rate, a consolation," returned Baudoyer; "one has the esteem of honest people."

"If you will condescend to use your influence to procure the place of assistant-clerk under you, and the chief clerk's place for M. Bixiou, you will make the fortunes of two men, and both of them are capable of doing anything to secure your elevation."

"Are you laughing at us, sir?" asked Saillard, opening wide foolish eyes.

"Far be the thought from me," said Dutocq. "I have

just been to take the obituary notice of M. de la Billardière to the newspaper office; M. des Lupeaulx sent me. I have the highest respect for your talents after reading the article in the paper. When the time comes for making an end of Rabourdin, it is in my power to strike the final blow; condescend to recollect that."

Dutocq disappeared.

"I'll be hanged if I understand a word of this," said Saillard, as he stared at Baudoyer, whose little eyes expressed no common degree of bewilderment. "We must send out for the paper this evening."

When the pair entered the sitting-room on the ground floor, they found Mme. Saillard, Elizabeth, M. Gaudron, and the vicar of St. Paul's all seated by a large fire. The vicar turned as they came in; and Elizabeth, looking at her husband, made a sign of intelligence, but to little purpose.

"Sir," the curé was saying, "I was unwilling to delay my thanks for the magnificent gift with which you have adorned my poor church; I could not venture into debt to buy that splendid monstrance. It is fit for a cathedral. As one of the most regular and pious of our parishioners, you must have been particularly impressed by the bareness of the high altar. I am just going to see M. le Coadjuteur; he will shortly express his satisfaction."

"I have done nothing as yet——" began Baudoyer, but his wife broke in upon him.

"M. le Curé," said she, "I may betray the whole of his secret now. M. Baudoyer counts upon completing what he has begun by giving you a canopy against Corpus Domini. But the purchase depends, to some extent, upon the state of our finances, and our finances depend upon our advancement."

"God rewards those who honor Him," said M. Gaudron, as he followed the curé.

"Why do you not do us the honor to take pot-luck with us?" asked Saillard.

"Don't go, my dear Gaudron," said the curé. "I have an

invitation to dine with the curé of Saint-Roch, you know; he will take M. de la Billardière's funeral service to-morrow."

"M. le Curé de Saint-Roch might say a word for us, perhaps?" began Baudoyer, but his wife gave a sharp tug at his coat-tails.

"Do be quiet, Baudoyer!" she whispered, as she drew him into a corner. "You have given a monstrance worth five thousand francs to our parish church. I will explain it all by and by."

Baudoyer, the close-fisted, made a hideous grimace, and appeared pensive throughout dinner.

"What ever made you take so much trouble to get a passport for Falleix? What is this that you are meddling in?" he asked at length.

"It seems to me that Falleix's business is, to some extent, ours," Elizabeth answered drily, warning her husband with a glance not to speak before M. Gaudron.

"Certainly it is," said old Saillard, thinking of the partnership.

"You reached the newspaper office in time, I hope," continued Elizabeth, addressing M. Gaudron, as she handed him a plate of soup.

"Yes, my dear madam," the curé replied. "The editor made not the slightest difficulty when he read the few words from the Grand Almoner's secretary. Through his good offices the little paragraph was put in the most suitable position. I should never have thought of that, but the young man at the newspaper office was very wide awake. The champions of religion may now combat infidelity with equal forces, for there is much talent shown in the Royalist newspapers. I have every reason to believe that success will crown your hopes. But you must remember, my dear Baudoyer, to use your influence for M. Colleville. It is in him that His Eminence is interested, and I received an injunction to mention M. Colleville to you."

"If I am head of the division, he shall be one of my chief clerks if they like," said Baudoyer.

The clue to the riddle was discovered after dinner when the porter came in with the ministerial paper. The two following paragraphs (called *entre-filets* in journalistic language) appeared therein among the items of news:—

"M. le Baron de la Billardière died this morning after a long and painful illness. In him the King loses a devoted servant, and the Church one of the most pious among her children. M. de la Billardière's end was a worthy crown of a great career, a fitting termination of a life that was wholly devoted to perilous missions in perilous times, and subsequently to the fulfilment of very difficult duties. As grand provost of a department, M. de la Billardière's force of character triumphed over all obstacles raised by rebellion; and later, when he accepted an arduous post as the head of a department, his insight was not less useful than his Frenchman's urbanity in the conduct of the weighty affairs transacted in his province. No rewards were ever better deserved than those by which His Majesty was pleased to crown a loyalty that never wavered under the usurper.—The ancient family will live again in a younger scion, who inherits the talent and devotion of the excellent man whose loss is mourned by so many friends. His Majesty, with a gracious word, has already given out that M. Benjamin de la Billardière is to be one of the Gentleman in Ordinary of the Bedchamber.

"Any of the late M. de la Billardière's numerous friends who have not yet received cards, and may not receive them in time, are informed that the funeral will take place to-morrow at Saint-Roch at four o'clock. The funeral sermon will be preached by M. l'Abbé Fontanon."

"M. Isidore Baudoyer, representative of one of the oldest burgher families in Paris, and chief clerk in the la Billardière division, has just revived memories of the old traditions of piety which distinguished the great burgher houses of olden times, when citizens were so jealous of the pomp of Religion, and such lovers of her monuments. The Church of St. Paul,

a basilica which we owe to the Society of Jesus, lacked a monstrance in keeping with its architectural splendors. Neither the vestry nor the incumbent could afford to give such an adornment to the altar. M. Baudoyer has just presented the parish with the monstrance that many persons have admired at the establishment of M. Gohier, the King's goldsmith; and, thanks to piety that did not shrink from so large a sum, the Church of St. Paul now possesses a masterpiece of the goldsmith's craft, executed from M. de Sommervieux's designs. We are glad to give publicity to a fact which shows the absurdity of Liberal bombast as to the state of feeling among the Parisian bourgeoisie. The upper middle classes have been Royalist through all time, and always will prove themselves Royalists at need."

"The price was five thousand francs," said the Abbé Gaudron, "but for ready money the Court goldsmith lowered his demands."

"Representative of one of the oldest burgher families in Paris!" repeated Saillard. "There it is in print, and in the official paper too!"

"Dear M. Gaudron, do help my father to think of something to slip into the Countess' ear when he takes her the monthly allowance—just a few words that say everything. I will leave you now. I must go out with Uncle Mitral. Would you believe it?—I could not find Uncle Bidault. What dog-hole can he be living in! M. Mitral, knowing his ways, said that all his business is done between eight o'clock and noon; after that hour he is only to be found at a place called the Café Thémis—a queer-sounding name——"

"Do they do justice there?" the Abbé asked, laughing.

"How does he get to a café at the corner of the Quai des Augustins and the Rue Dauphine? He plays a game of dominoes there with his friend M. Gobseck every night, they say. I don't want to go all by myself, but uncle will take me and bring me back again."

As she spoke, Mitral shoved his yellow countenance beneath

a wig that might have been made of twitch-grass and plastered down on the top of his head. This worthy made a sign, which, being interpreted, meant that his niece had better come at once, without further waste of time which was paid at the rate of two francs an hour; and Mme. Baudoyer went accordingly, without a word of explanation to her father or husband.

When Elizabeth had gone, M. Gaudron turned to Baudoyer.

"Heaven," observed he, "has bestowed on you a treasure of prudence and virtue in your wife; she is a pattern of wisdom, a Christian woman with a divine gift of understanding. Religion alone can form a character so complete. To-morrow I will say the mass for the success of the good cause. In the interests of the Monarchy and Religion you must be appointed. M. Rabourdin is a Liberal; he subscribes to the *Journal des Débats,* a disastrous publication that levies war on M. le Comte de Villèle to serve the interests of M. de Chateaubriand. His Eminence is sure to see the paper this evening, if it is only on account of his poor friend M. de la Billardière; and Monseigneur le Coadjuteur will be sure to mention you and Rabourdin. I know M. le Curé; if any one thinks of his dear Church, he does not forget them in his sermon; and now, at this moment, he has the honor to dine with the Coadjuteur at the house of M. le Curé de Saint-Roch."

At these words it began to dawn upon Saillard and Baudoyer that Elizabeth had not been idle since Godard brought her the news.

"She is a sharp one, is Elizabeth!" cried Saillard. He could appreciate his daughter's quick, mole-like progress more fully than the Abbé could.

"She sent Godard to M. Rabourdin's to find out what newspapers he takes," continued Gaudron, "and I gave His Eminence's secretary a hint; for as things are at this moment, the Church and the Crown are bound to know their friends and their enemies."

"These five days I have been trying to think of something to say to His Excellency's wife," said Saillard.

Baudoyer could not take his eyes off the paper. "All Paris is reading that," he said.

"Your praise costs us four thousand eight hundred francs, sonny!" said Mme. Saillard.

"You have adorned the house of God," put in the Abbé.

"We might have saved our souls without that though," returned she. "But the place, if Baudoyer gets it, is worth an extra eight thousand francs, so the sacrifice will not be great. And if he doesn't? Eh! *ma mère?*" she continued, as she looked at her husband. "If he doesn't—what a drain on us!"

"Oh! well," cried Saillard, in the enthusiasm of the moment, "then we should make it up out of the business. Falleix is going to expand his business. He made his brother a stock-jobber on purpose to make him useful. Elizabeth might as well have told us why Falleix had flown off.—But let us think of something to say. This is what I thought of: 'Madame, if you would only say a word to His Excellency——'"

"'Would only!'" broke in Gaudron. "'If you would condescend' is more respectful. Besides, you must first make sure that Madame la Dauphine will use her influence for you, for in that case you might insinuate the notion of falling in with Her Royal Highness' wishes."

"The vacant post ought to be expressly named," said Baudoyer.

"'Madame la Comtesse,'" began Saillard, as he rose to his feet, with an ingratiating smile directed at his wife.

"Good gracious, Saillard, how funny you look! Do take care, my boy, or you will make her laugh."

"'Madame la Comtesse!' . . . (Is that better?)" he asked of his wife.

"Yes, ducky."

"'The late M. de la Billardière's place is vacant; my son-in-law, M. Baudoyer——"

"'A man of talent and lofty piety,'" prompted Gaudron.

"Put it down, Baudoyer," cried old Saillard; "put it down!"

Baudoyer, in all simplicity, took up a pen and wrote his own panegyric without a blush, precisely as Nathan or Canalis might review one of his own books.

"'Madame la Comtesse,'" repeated Saillard for the third time, then he broke off; "you see, mother, I am making believe that you are the Minister's wife."

"Do you take me for a fool?" retorted she. "I see that quite well."

"'The late worthy M. de la Billardière's place is vacant; my son-in-law, M. Baudoyer, a man of consummate talent and lofty piety——"

He paused for a moment, looked at M. Gaudron, who seemed to be pondering something, and then added:

"'Would be very glad to get it.' Ha! not bad; it is short, and says all we want to say."

"But just wait a bit, Saillard! You surely can see that M. l'Abbé is turning things over in his mind," exclaimed his wife, "so don't disturb him."

"—— 'Would be very happy if you would deign to interest yourself on his behalf,'" resumed Gaudron; "'and by saying a few words to His Excellency you would be doing Mme. la Dauphine a particular pleasure, for it has been his good fortune to find a protectress in her.'"

"Ah! M. Gaudron, that last remark was well worth the monstrance; I am not so sorry now about the four thousand eight hundred francs.—Besides, Baudoyer, I say, you are going to pay for it, my boy. Have you put that down?"

"I will hear you say that over, night and morning, *ma mère,*" said Mme. Saillard. "Yes, it is very well hit off, is that speech. How fortunate you are to be so learned, M. Gaudron! That is what comes of studying in these seminaries; you are taught how to speak to God and the saints."

"He is as kind as he is learned," said Baudoyer, grasping

the Abbé's hands as he spoke. "Did you write that article?" he continued, pointing to the paper.

"No," returned Gaudron. "It was written by His Eminence's secretary, a young fellow who lies under great obligations to me, and takes an interest in M. Colleville. I paid for his education at the Seminary."

"A good deed never loses its reward," commented Baudoyer.

When these four personages sat themselves down to their game of boston, Elizabeth and Uncle Mitral had reached the *Café Thémis,* talking by the way of the business on hand. Elizabeth's tact had discovered the most powerful lever to force the Minister's hand. Uncle Mitral, a retired bailiff, was an expert on chicanery, in legal expedients, and precautions. He considered that the honor of the family was involved in his nephew's success. Avarice had led him to cast an eye into Gigonnet's strong box; he knew that all the money would go to his nephew Baudoyer; and therefore he wished to see Baudoyer in a position that befitted the fortunes of the Saillards and Gigonnet, for all would come some day to Elizabeth's little daughter. What may not a girl look for when she has more than a hundred thousand francs a year? Mitral had taken up his niece's ideas and grasped them thoroughly. So he had hastened Falleix's journey by explaining that you can travel quicker by post. Since then he had reflected, over his dinner, upon the proper curve to be given to a spring of Elizabeth's designing.

Arrived at the *Café Thémis,* he told his niece that he had better go in alone to arrange with Gigonnet, and left her outside in the cab till the time should come for her intervention. Elizabeth could see Gobseck and Bidault through the window-panes; their heads were thrown into relief by the bright yellow-painted panels of the old-fashioned coffee-house; they looked like two cameos; it seemed as if the cold, unchanging expression on their countenances had been caught and fixed there by the carver's art. The misers were surrounded by aged faces, each one furrowed with curving wrinkles that

started from the nose and brought the glazed cheek-bones into prominence—wrinkles in which thirty per cent discount seemed to be written. All the faces brightened up at sight of Mitral; a tigerish curiosity glittered in all eyes.

"Hey! hey! it is Daddy Mitral!" cried Chaboisseau, a little old bill-discounter, who did his business among publishers and booksellers.

"My word! so it is," replied a paper merchant, by name Métivier. "Ah! 'tis an old monkey, you can't teach him any tricks!"

"And you are an old raven, a good judge of corpses."

"Precisely so," said the stern Gobseck.

"Why have you come here, my boy? To nab our friend Métivier?" asked Gigonnet, pointing out a man who looked like a retired porter.

"Your grandniece Elizabeth is outside, Daddy Gigonnet," whispered Mitral.

"What? Anything wrong?" queried Bidault. The old man scowled as he spoke, and his air was about as tender as the expression of a headsman on a scaffold; but, in spite of his Roman manhood, he must have felt perturbed, for his deep carmine countenance lost a trifle of its color.

"Well, and if something had gone wrong, wouldn't you help Saillard's child, a little thing that has knitted stockings for you these thirty years?" cried Mitral.

"If security is forthcoming, I do not say no," returned Gigonnet. "Falleix is in this. Your Falleix has set up his brother as a stockbroker; he does as much business as the Brézacs; with what? His brains, no doubt. After all, Saillard is not a baby."

"He knows the value of money," remarked Chaboisseau. And one and all the old men wagged their heads. A man of imagination would have shuddered if he had heard those words as they were uttered.

"Besides, if anything happens to my kith or kin, it is no affair of mine," began Bidault-Gigonnet. "I make it a principle," continued he, "never to be let in with my friends

or relatives; for you only get your death through your weakest spot. Ask Gobseck; he is soft."

All the bill-discounters applauded this doctrine, nodding their metallic heads, till you might have listened for the creaking of ill-greased machinery.

"Oh, come now, Gigonnet," put in Chaboisseau, "a little tenderness, when your stockings have been knitted for you for thirty years."

"Ah! that counts for something," commented Gobseck.

"There are no outsiders here," pursued Mitral, who had been taking a look round, "so we can speak freely. I have come here with a good bit of business——"

"If it is good, what makes you come to us?" Gigonnet interrupted sourly.

"A chap that was a Gentleman of the Bedchamber, an old Chouan, what's his name—la Billardière—is dead."

"Really?" asked Gobseck.

"And here is my nephew giving monstrances to churches!" said Gigonnet.

"He is not such a fool as to give, he is selling them, daddy," Mitral retorted proudly. "It is a question of getting M. de la Billardière's place; and to reach it, one must seize——"

"*Seize!* Always a bailiff!" cried Métivier, clapping Mitral on the shoulder. "I like that, I do!"

——"Seizing the Sieur Chardin des Lupeaulx between our claws," continued Mitral. "Now, Elizabeth has found out how to do it, and it is——"

"Elizabeth!" Gigonnet broke in again. "Dear little creature! She takes after her grandfather, my poor brother. Bidault had not his like. Ah! if you had only seen him at old furniture sales. Such an instinct! Up to everything! —What does she want?"

"Oh, come now! Daddy Gigonnet, you find your family affections very quickly. There must be some cause for this phenomenon."

"You child!" said Gobseck, addressing Gigonnet, "always too impetuous."

"Come, my masters, Gobseck and Gigonnet both, you need des Lupeaulx; you recollect how you plucked him, and you are afraid that he may ask for a little of his down again," said Mitral.

"Can we talk of this business with him?" Gobseck asked, indicating Mitral.

"Mitral is one of us; he would not play a trick on old customers," returned Gigonnet. "Very well, Mitral. Between ourselves," he continued, lowering his voice for the retired bailiff's ear, "we three have just been buying up certain debts, and the admission of them lies with the Committee of Liquidation."

"What can you concede?" asked Mitral.

"Nothing," said Gobseck.

"Our names don't appear in it," added Gigonnet. "Samanon is acting as our fence."

"Look here, Gigonnet," began Mitral. "It is cold, and your grandniece is waiting. I'll put the whole thing in a word or two, and you will understand. You two between you must lend Falleix two hundred and fifty thousand francs, without interest. At this present moment he is tearing along the road thirty leagues away from Paris, with a courier riding ahead."

"Is it possible?" asked Gobseck.

"Where is he going?" cried Gigonnet.

"Why, he is going down to des Lupeaulx's fine estate in the country. He knows the neighborhood; and with the aforesaid two hundred and fifty thousand francs he is going to buy up some of the excellent land round about the Secretary-General's hovel. The land will always fetch what was given for it. And a deed signed in the presence of a notary need not be registered for nine days—bear that in mind! With these trifling additions, de Lupeaulx's 'estate' will pay a thousand francs per annum in taxes. *Ergo,* des Lupeaulx will be an elector of the *'grand collège,'* qualified for election, a Count and anything that he likes. Do you know the deputy that backed out of it?"

The two usurers nodded.

"Des Lupeaulx would cut off a leg to be a deputy," continued Mitral. "But when we show him the contracts, he will be for having them made out in his name; our loan to be charged, of course, as a mortgage on the land, reserving the right to sell. (Aha! do you take me?) First of all, we want the place for Baudoyer; afterwards we hand over des Lupeaulx to you. Falleix is stopping down there, getting ready for the election, so through Falleix you will have a pistol held to des Lupeaulx's head all through the election, for Falleix's friends are in the majority. Do you see Falleix's hand in this, Daddy Gigonnet?"

"I see Mitral's too," remarked Métivier. "The trick is neatly done."

"It is a bargain," said Gigonnet. "That is so, isn't it, Gobseck? Falleix must sign counter-deeds for us, and have the mortgage made out in his own name; and we will pay des Lupeaulx a visit in the nick of time."

"And *we* are being robbed," put in Gobseck.

"Ah! I should very much like to know the man that robs you, daddy," retorted Mitral.

"Why, no one can rob us but ourselves," returned Gigonnet. "We thought we were doing a good thing when we bought up all des Lupeaulx's debts at a discount of sixty per cent."

"You can add them to the mortgage on his place, and have yet another hold on him through the interest," returned Mitral.

"That is possible," said Gobseck.

Bidault, *alias* Gigonnet, exchanged a quick glance with Gobseck, and went to the door.

"Go ahead, Elizabeth!" he said, addressing his niece. "We have your man fast, but look after details. You have made a good beginning, sly girl! Go through with it, you have your uncle's esteem——" and he struck his hand playfully in hers.

"But Métivier and Chaboisseau may try a sudden stroke,"

said Mitral; "they might go to-night to some Opposition paper, catch the ball at a rebound, and pay us back for the Ministerialist article. Go back by yourself, child; I will not let those two cormorants go out of sight."

And he returned to the Café.

"To-morrow the money shall go to its destination through a word to the receiver-general. We will raise a hundred thousand crowns' worth of his paper *among friends*," said Gigonnet, when Mitral came to speak to him.

Next day the readers of a Liberal paper in wide circulation beheld the following paragraph among the items of news. It had been inserted by command of MM. Chaboisseau and Métivier, to whom no editor could refuse anything; for were they not shareholders in two newspapers, and did they not also discount the bills of publishers, printers, and paper-merchants?

"Yesterday," so ran the paragraph, "a Ministerialist paper evidently pointed out M. le Baron de la Billardière's successor. M. Baudoyer is one of the most eligible citizens of a thickly populated district, where his beneficence is not less known than the piety upon which the Ministerialist sheet lays so much stress. But mention might have been made of M. Baudoyer's abilities. Did our contemporary remember that even in vaunting the antiquity of M. Baudoyer's burgher descent (and an ancient burgher ancestry is as much a noblesse as any other), in the matter of that very burgher descent she touched upon the reason of the probable exclusion of her candidate? Gratuitous treachery! The good lady, according to her wont, flatters those whom she destroys. M. Baudoyer's appointment would be a tribute to the virtue and capacity of the middle classes, and of the middle class we shall always be the advocates, though we may see that often we are only defending a lost cause. It would be a piece of good policy and an act of justice to nominate M. Baudoyer to the vacant post; so the Ministry will

not permit it. The Religious sheet for once showed more sense than its masters; it will get into trouble."

The next day was Friday, the day of Mme. Rabourdin's dinner-party. At midnight on Thursday des Lupeaulx had left her on the staircase at the Bouffons, where she stood, in her radiant beauty, her hand on Mme. de Camps' arm (for Mme. Firmiani had recently married); and when the old libertine came to himself again, his ideas of revenge had calmed down, or rather they had grown cooler—he could think of nothing but that last glance exchanged with Mme. Rabourdin.

"I will make sure of Rabourdin," he thought, "by forgiving him in the first instance; I will be even with him later on. At present, if he does not get his step, I must give up a woman who might be an invaluable aid to a great political success, for she understands everything; she shrinks back from no idea. What is more, in that case I should not find out this administrative scheme of Rabourdin's until it was laid before the Minister. Come, dear des Lupeaulx; it is a question of overcoming all obstacles for your Célestine. You may grimace, Mme. la Comtesse, but you are going to invite Mme. Rabourdin to your next small select party."

Some men can put revenge into a corner of their hearts till they gratify their passions; des Lupeaulx was one of them. His mind was fully made up; he determined to carry Rabourdin's nomination.

"I am going to prove to you, dear chief clerk, that I deserve a high place in your diplomatic galleys," he said to himself, as he took his seat in his private office and opened his newspapers.

He had known the contents of the Ministerial sheet only too well at five o'clock on the previous day, so he did not care to amuse himself by reading it through; but he opened it to glance at the obituary notice of la Billardière, thinking as he did so of the predicament in which du Bruel had put him, when he brought in the satirical performance com-

posed under Bixiou's editorship. He could not help laughing as he perused the biography of the late Comte de la Fontaine, adapted and reprinted, after a few months' interval, for M. de la Billardière. Then, all of a sudden, his eyes were dazzled by the name of Baudoyer! With fury he read the specious article which compromised the department. He rang the bell vigorously and sent for Dutocq, meaning to send him to the newspaper office. But what was his astonishment when he read the reply in the Opposition paper, for it so happened that the Liberal sheet was the first to come to hand. The thing was getting serious. He knew the dodge; it seemed to him that the master hand was making a mess of his cards, and he took his opponent for a Greek of the first order. To dispose so adroitly of two papers of opposite politics, and that at once, and on the same evening; to begin the game, moreover, by guessing at the Minister's intentions! He fancied that he recognized the hand of an acquaintance, a Liberal editor, and vowed to question him that night at the Opéra. Dutocq appeared.

"Read that," said des Lupeaulx, holding out the two papers while he ran his eyes over the rest of the batch to see whether Baudoyer had pulled other wires. "Just go and find out who it was that took it into his head to compromise the department in this way."

"It was not M. Baudoyer, anyhow," replied Dutocq. "He did not leave the office yesterday. There is no need to go to the office. When I took your article yesterday, I saw the Abbé there. He came provided with a letter from the Grand Almoner; you yourself would have given way if you had seen it."

"Dutocq, you have some grudge against M. Rabourdin, and it is not right of you, for he prevented your dismissal twice. Still we cannot help our feelings; and one may happen to dislike a man who does one a kindness. Only, bear in mind that if you permit yourself the smallest attempt at treachery against him until I give the word, it will be your ruin; you can count me as your enemy. As for my

friend and his newspaper, let the Grand Almonry subscribe for our number of copies, if its columns are to be devoted to their exclusive use. The year is almost at an end, the question of subscriptions will be raised directly, and then we shall see. As for la Billardière's post, there is one way of putting a stop to this sort of thing, and that is, to make the appointment this very day."

Dutocq went back to the office.

"Gentlemen," he remarked, "I do not know whether Bixiou has the gift of reading the future; but if you have not seen the Ministerial paper, I recommend the paragraph on Baudoyer to your careful attention; and then as M. Fleury takes the opposition paper, you may see the double of it. Certainly, M. Rabourdin is a clever man; but a man who gives a monstrance worth six thousand francs to a church, is deucedly clever too, as times go."

Bixiou (*coming in*). "What do you say to the first chapter of an epistle to the Corinthians in our religious paper, and the epistle to the ministers in the Liberal sheet? —How is M. Rabourdin, du Bruel?"

Du Bruel (*coming in*). "I do not know." (*Draws Bixou into his sanctum and lowers his voice.*) "My dear fellow, your way of helping a man is uncommonly like the hangman's way, when he hoists you on his shoulders the better to break your neck. You let me in for a whipping from des Lupeaulx, and I deserved it for my stupidity. A nice thing that article on la Billardière! It is a trick that I shall not forget! The very first sentence as good as told the King that it was time to die. And the account of the Quiberon affair clearly meant that His Majesty was a—— The whole thing was ironical, in fact."

Bixiou (*bursting into a laugh*). "Oh, come! are you getting cross? Cannot one have a joke?"

Du Bruel. "A joke! a joke! When you want to be chief clerk's assistant they will put you off with jokes, my dear fellow.

Bixiou (*with a threat in his tones*). "Are we getting cross?"

Du Bruel. "Yes."

Bixiou (*drily*). "Very well, so much the worse for you."

Du Bruel (*reflecting uneasily*). "Could you get over it yourself?"

Bixiou (*insinuatingly*). "From a friend? I should think I could." (*Fleury's voice is heard in the office.*) "There is Fleury cursing Baudoyer. It was a neat trick, hey? Baudoyer will get the step." (*Confidentially.*) "After all, so much the better. Follow up the consequences carefully, du Bruel. Rabourdin would show a poor spirit if he stopped on under Baudoyer; he will resign, and that will leave two vacant places. You will be chief clerk, and you will take me with you as assistant. We will write vaudevilles in collaboration, and I will fag for you at the office."

Du Bruel (*brightening*). "I say, I did not think of that. Poor Rabourdin! Still, I should be sorry."

Bixiou. "Ah! so that is how you love him!" (*Changing his tone.*) "Oh, well, I do not pity him either. After all, he is well to do; his wife gives parties, and does not ask me, when I go everywhere! Come, good-bye, no malice, du Bruel; there is a good fellow." (*Goes out into the general office.*) "Good-day, gentlemen! Did I not tell you yesterday that if a man has nothing but principles and ability, he will always be very badly off, even with a pretty wife?"

Fleury. "You are rich yourself!"

Bixiou. "Not bad, dear Cincinnatus! But you are going to give me a dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale.*"

Poiret. "I never know what to make of M. Bixiou!"

Phellion (*ruefully*). "M. Rabourdin so seldom reads the papers, that it may be worth while to take them in for him, and to do without them ourselves for a bit." (*Fleury hands over his sheet; Vimeux passes the newspaper taken by the office; and Phellion goes out with them*).

At that moment des Lupeaulx was going downstairs to breakfast with the Minister. As he went, he was wondering within himself whether prudence did not dictate that

"A word or two with you, my lord!"

he should fathom the wife's heart before displaying the fine flower of scoundrelism for the husband, and make sure, first of all, that his devotion would be rewarded. He was feeling the little pulse that still throbbed in his heart, when he met his attorney on the staircase, and was greeted with, "A word or two with you, my lord!" uttered with the smiling familiarity of a man who knows that he is indispensable.

"What, my dear Desroches!" exclaimed the politician. "What has happened? These people lose their tempers; they cannot do as I do, and wait."

"I came at once to give you warning that your bills are in the hands of Messrs. Gobseck and Gigonnet, under the name of one Samanon."

"Men that I put in the way of making enormous amounts of money!"

"Look here!" continued Desroches in lowered tones; "Gigonnet's name is Bidault; Saillard your cashier is his nephew; and Saillard is besides the father-in-law of a certain Baudoyer who thinks he has a right to the vacant post in your department. I had cause to give you warning, had I not?"

"Thanks," said des Lupeaulx, with a nod of good-bye and a knowing glance.

"One stroke of the pen and you get a receipt in full," said Desroches, as he went.

"That is the way with these immense sacrifices, you can't speak of them to a woman," thought des Lupeaulx. "Is Célestine worth the riddance of all my debts? I will go and see her this morning."

And so, in a few hours' time, the fair Mme. Rabourdin was to be the arbiter of her husband's destinies; and no power on earth could warn her of the importance of her replies, no danger signal bid her compose her voice and manner. And, unluckily, she was confident of success; she did not know that the ground beneath Rabourdin was undermined in all directions with the burrowings of teredos.

"Well, my lord," said des Lupeaulx, as he entered the

breakfast-room, "have you seen the paragraphs on Baudoyer?"

"For Heaven's sake, my dear fellow, let nominations alone for a minute," returned the Minister. "I had that monstrance flung at my head yesterday. To secure Rabourdin, the nomination must go before the board at once; I will not have my hand forced. It is enough to make one sick of public life. If we are to keep Rabourdin, we must promote one Colleville——"

"Will you leave me to manage this farce and think no more about it? I will amuse you every morning with an account of the moves in a game of chess with the Grand Almonry," said des Lupeaulx.

"Very well," replied the Minister, "work with the chief of the staff. Don't you know that an argument in an Opposition paper is the most likely thing of all to strike the King's mind? A Minister overruled by a Baudoyer; just think of it!"

"A bigot and a driveler," said des Lupeaulx; "he is as incompetent as——"

"La Billardière," put in His Excellency.

"La Billardière at least behaved like a Gentleman in Ordinary of the Bedchamber," said des Lupeaulx.—"Madame," he continued, turning to the Countess, "it will be absolutely necessary now to invite Mme. Rabourdin to your next small party. I must point out that Mme. de Camps is a friend of hers; they were at the Italiens together yesterday, and she has been to my knowledge at the Hôtel Firmiani; so you can see whether she is likely to commit any solecism in a salon."

"Send an invitation to Mme. Rabourdin, dear, and let us change the subject," said the Minister.

"So Célestine is in my clutches!" des Lupeaulx said to himself, as he went up to his rooms for a morning toilette.

Parisian households are eaten up with a desire to be in harmony with the luxury which surrounds them on all sides;

those who are wise enough to live as their income prescribes are in a small minority. Perhaps this failing is akin to a very French patriotism, an effort to preserve supremacy in matters of costume for France. France lays down the law to all Europe in fashions, and everybody in the country regards it as a duty to preserve her commercial sceptre, for France rules the fashions if Britain rules the waves. The patriotic fervor which leads the Frenchman to sacrifice everything to "seemliness" (as d'Aubigné said of Henry III.) causes an immense amount of hard work behind the scenes; work that absorbs a Parisienne's whole morning, especially if, like Mme. Rabourdin, she tries to live on an income of twelve thousand livres in a style which many wealthier people would not attempt on thirty thousand.

So, every Friday, the day of the weekly dinner-party, Mme. Rabourdin used to assist the housemaid who swept and dusted the rooms, for the cook was despatched to the market at an early hour, and the man-servant was busy cleaning the silver, polishing the glasses, and arranging the table napkins. If any ill-advised caller had escaped the porter's vigilance and climbed the stairs to Mme. Rabourdin's abode, he would have found her in a most unpicturesque disorder. Arrayed in a loose morning-gown, with her feet thrust into an old pair of slippers, and her hair in a careless knot, she was engaged in trimming lamps or arranging flowers, or hastily preparing an unromantic breakfast. If the visitor had not been previously initiated into the mysteries of Paris life, he would certainly learn there and then that it is inexpedient to set foot behind the scenes thereof; before very long he would be held up as an example, he would be capable of the blackest deeds. A woman surprised in her morning mysteries will talk of his stupidity and indiscretion, till she ruins the intruder. Indulgent as the Parisienne may be to curiosity that turns to her profit; she is implacable to indiscretion which finds her at a disadvantage. Such a domiciliary visit is not so much an indecent assault, to use the language of the police-courts, as flat burglary,

and theft of the dearest treasure of all, to wit, Credit. A woman may have no objection to be discovered half dressed with her hair about her shoulders; if all her hair is her own, she is a gainer by the incident; but no woman cares to be seen sweeping out her rooms, there is a loss of "seemliness" in it.

Mme. Rabourdin was in the thick of her Friday preparations, and surrounded by provisions fished up from that ocean, the Great Market, when M. des Lupeaulx made his surreptitious call. Truly, the Secretary-General was the last person whom the fair Rabourdin expected to see; so hearing his boots creak on the stairs, she cried, "The hairdresser already!" If the sound of the words struck unpleasantly in des Lupeaulx's ears, the sight of des Lupeaulx was not a whit more agreeable to the lady. She took refuge in her bedroom amid a terrible muddle, a perfect Shrovetide assemblage of motley furniture and heterogeneous elegance, which had been pent thither to be out of sight; but the negligent morning-dress proved so alluring, that the bold des Lupeaulx followed the frightened fair one. A vague, indescribable something tantalized him; glimpses caught through a half-fastened slip seemed a thousand times more enticing than a full display of every graceful curve, from the line traced round the shoulders by a low velvet bodice to the vanishing point of the prettiest rounded swan-like throat that ever lover kissed before a ball. If your eyes rest on a splendidly developed bust set off by full dress, it suggests a comparison with the elaborate dessert of a great dinner; but the glance that steals under cambrics crumpled by slumber will find dainties there on which to feast, sweets to be relished like the stolen fruit that reddens among the leaves upon the trellis.

"Wait! wait!" cried the fair lady, bolting herself in with her disorder.

She rang for Thérèse, for the cook, for the man-servant, for her daughter, imploring a shawl. She longed for stage machinery to shift the scene at the manager's whistle. And

the whistle was given and the transformation worked in a hand's turn after all. And behold a new phenomenon! The room took on a piquant air of morning which harmonized with an impromptu toilette, all devised for the greater glory of a woman who, in this instance, clearly rose superior to her sex.

"You!" she exclaimed, "and at this hour! What ever can it be?"

"The most serious thing in the world," returned des Lupeaulx. "To-day we must arrive at a clear understanding of each other."

Célestine looked straight through the eyeglasses into the man's thoughts, and understood.

"It is my chief weakness," said she, "to be prodigiously fanciful; I do not mingle politics and affection, for instance; let us talk of politics and business, and afterwards we shall see. And besides, this is not a mere whim; it is one consequence of my artistic taste; I cannot put discordant colors or incongruous things together; I shun jarring contrasts. We women have a policy of our own."

Even as she spoke, her pretty ways and the tones of her voice produced their effect; the Secretary-General's brutality was giving place to sentimental courtesy. She had recalled him to a sense of what was due from him as a lover. A clever, pretty woman creates her own atmosphere, as it were; nerves are relaxed and sentiments softened in her presence.

"You do not know what is going on," des Lupeaulx returned abruptly, for he tried to persevere in his brutality. "Read that!"

Des Lupeaulx had previously marked the paragraphs in red ink; he now held out the newspapers to the graceful woman before him. As Célestine read, her shawl slipped open; but she was either unconscious of this, or successfully feigned unconsciousness. Des Lupeaulx had reached the age when fancies are the more potent because they pass so swiftly; but if he found it difficult to keep self-control, Célestine was equally hard put to it.

"What!" said she. "Why, this is dreadful! Who is this Baudoyer?"

"A jackass," returned des Lupeaulx; "but, as you see, he carries the relics, and with a clever hand on the bridle he will reach his goal."

Mme. Rabourdin's debts rose up before her eyes and dazzled her; she seemed to see one lightning flash after another; the blood surged through her veins till her ears rang with the heavy pulse beats; she sat in a stupor, staring with unseeing eyes at a bracket on the wall. Then she turned to des Lupeaulx.

"But you are true to us?" she said, with a glance like a caress, a glance that was meant to bind him to herself.

"That depends," he answered, returning her look with an inquisitive glance that brought the red into the poor woman's face.

"If you insist upon earnest-money, you will lose the full payment," she said with a laugh. "I imagined that you were greater than you are. And as for you, you think I am very small, a mere schoolgirl."

"You did not understand," he said meaningly. "I meant that I cannot serve a man who is going against me, as l'Étourdi thwarts Mascarille."

"What does this mean?"

"This will show you that I am great," he said. And he gave her Dutocq's stolen list, pointing as he did so to her husband's shrewd analysis of his character.

"Read that!"

Célestine recognized the handwriting, read, and turned pale at this bludgeon blow.

"All the departments are in it," added des Lupeaulx.

"But, fortunately, no one but you possesses a copy. I cannot explain it."

"The thief that stole it is not so simple that he would not take a duplicate; he is too great a liar to confess to the copy, and too intelligent in his trade to give it up. I have not even asked him about it."

"Who is he?"

"Your first draughting-clerk."

"Dutocq. You are never punished except for doing a kindness.—But he is a dog that wants a bone," she added.

"Do you know what a tentative offer has been held out to me, poor devil of a Secretary-General that I am?"

"What?"

"I owe a miserable thirty thousand odd francs. You will at once form a very poor opinion of me when you know that I am not more in debt; but, indeed, in this respect I am small! Well and good. Baudoyer's uncle has just bought up my debts, and is ready, no doubt, to give up my bills to me."

"But all this is infernal."

"Not a bit of it; it is monarchical and religious, for the Grand Almonry is mixed up in it——"

"What are you going to do?"

"What are your orders?" he asked, holding out a hand with an adorable charm of manner.

To Célestine he was no longer plain, nor old, nor frosted with powder, nor a secretary-general, nor anything unclean; but she did not give him her hand. In her drawing-room she would have allowed him to take it a hundred times in the course of an evening; but such a proceeding in the morning, when they were alone, was as good as a promise; it was rather too decisive—it might lead her further than she meant to go.

"And people say that statesmen have no hearts!" she cried, trying to soften the refusal with a gracious speech. "That frightened me," she added, with the most innocent air in the world.

"What a slander!" returned des Lupeaulx. "One of the most impassive of diplomatists, a man that has kept power ever since he was born, has just married an actress' daughter, and imposed her upon the most rigorous of all Courts in the matter of quarterings."

"And you will support us?"

"I work the nominations. But no trickery."

She held out her hand for him to kiss, and gave him a light tap on the cheek.

"You are mine," she said.

Des Lupeaulx admired that speech. (Indeed, the coxcomb told the story that evening at the Opéra, after his own fashion, as follows: "A woman did not wish to tell a man that she was his, an admission that a well-bred woman never makes, so she said, 'You are mine!' What do you think of the evasion?")

"But you must be my ally," he began. "Your husband said something to the Minister about a scheme of administration, and this list, in which I am handled so gently, is connected with it. Find out, and let me know this evening."

"It shall be done," said she. She saw no great importance in the matter that had brought des Lupeaulx to her house at such an early hour.

"The hairdresser, madame," announced the housemaid.

"He has kept me waiting a very long time!" she said. "I do not know how I should have come through if he had been any later," she thought within herself.

"You do not know how far my devotion goes," said des Lupeaulx, rising to his feet. "You are going to be invited to the Countess' next special and intimate party——"

"Oh! you are an angel," she said; "and I see how much you love me. You love me intelligently."

"This evening, dear child, I am going to the Opéra to find out who these journalists are that are conspiring for Baudoyer; and we will measure weapons."

"Yes, but you will dine here, will you not? I have ordered the things you like."

"All this is so much like love," des Lupeaulx said to himself as he went downstairs, "so much like love, that it would be pleasant to be deceived in such a way for a long while. But if she is laughing at me, I shall find it out. I have the most ingenious of snares ready for her, so that I may read her very heart before I sign. Ah! you kittens, we know

you; for, after all, women are just as we are. Twenty-eight years old and virtuous, and here in the Rue Duphot! It is a rare piece of luck which is well worth the trouble of cultivation."

And this eligible butterfly fluttered away down the staircase.

"Oh, dear! that man yonder without his spectacles must look very funny in his dressing-gown when his hair is powdered!" Célestine was saying to herself meanwhile. "He has the harpoon in his back; he is going to tow me at last to my goal—the Minister's house. He has played his part in my comedy."

When Rabourdin came home at five o'clock to dress, his wife came into the room and brought him the list. It seemed like the slipper in the *Arabian Nights*—the unlucky man was fated to meet it everywhere.

"Who put that in your hands?" Rabourdin asked in amazement.

"M. des Lupeaulx."

"Has he been here?" asked Rabourdin. A guilty woman would surely have turned pale beneath the look that he gave her, but his wife met it with marble brows and laughing eyes.

"Yes, and he is coming here again to dinner," said she. "Why do you look so horrified?"

"Dear," said Rabourdin, "I have given des Lupeaulx mortal offence. Men of that sort never forgive; and he is caressing me! Do you think that I cannot see why?"

"It seems to me that he has a very discriminating taste," she said. "I cannot blame him for it. After all, I know of nothing more flattering to a woman's vanity than the knowledge that she stimulates a jaded palate."

"A truce to jesting, Célestine! Spare an overburdened man. I cannot speak with the Minister, and my honor is at stake."

"Oh dear, no! Dutocq shall have the promise of a place, and you will be head of the division."

"I see what you mean, darling," said Rabourdin; "but you are playing a game that is quite as dishonoring as if you meant it in earnest. A lie is a lie, and an honest woman——"

"Pray let me make use of the weapons that they turn against us."

"Célestine, when that man sees how foolishly he has fallen into the snare, he will be all the more furious against me."

"And how if I upset him?"

Rabourdin stared at his wife in amazement.

"I am only thinking of your advancement," continued Célestine, "and it is time I did so, my poor love.—But you are taking the sporting-dog for the game," she added after a pause. "In a few days' time des Lupeaulx will have fulfilled his mission very sufficiently. While you are trying to say a word to the Minister, and before you can so much as see him, *I* shall have had a talk with him. You have strained every nerve to bring out this scheme that you have kept from me; and in three months your wife will have done more than you have done in six years. Tell me about this great project of yours."

So Rabourdin, as he shaved himself, began to explain his scheme, first obtaining a promise that his wife would not say a single word of his work; warning her, at the same time, that to give des Lupeaulx any idea of it would be to give the cream jug to the cat. But at the fifth sentence Célestine interrupted him.

"Rabourdin, why did you not speak to me about it?" she said. "Why, you would have saved yourself useless trouble. I can imagine that one may be blinded by an idea for a minute; but for six or seven years!—that I cannot conceive. You want to reduce the estimates? It is a commonplace, penny-wise economy! Rather we should aim at raising the income to two milliards. France would be twice as great. A new system would be this plan cried up by M. de Nucingen, a loan that would send an impulse through trade through the whole country. The poorest exchequer is the

one that has most francs lying idle. It is the Finance Minister's mission to fling money out of the windows, and it comes in at his cellars. And you would have him accumulate specie! Why, instead of reducing the number of posts under Government, you ought to increase them! Instead of paying off the national debt, you should increase the number of fund-holders. If the Bourbons mean to reign in peace, they ought to have fund-holders in every township; and, of all things, they should beware of raising foreign loans, for foreigners will be sure some day to require the repayment of the capital, whereas if none but Frenchmen have money invested in the funds, neither France nor national credit will perish. *That* saved England. This plan of yours is a little shopkeeper's scheme. An ambitious man should only present himself in the character of a second Law, without Law's ill-luck; he should explain the resources of credit; he should show that we ought not to sink money in extinguishing principal, but in payment of interest, as the English do——"

"Come, Célestine," said Rabourdin, "jumble up ideas together, make playthings of them, and contradict yourself! I am used to it. But do not criticise a piece of work before you know what it is."

"Is there any need to know what it is, when the gist of the matter is to carry on the administration in France with six thousand officials instead of twenty thousand? Why, my dear, even if the scheme were invented by a man of genius, a King of France would lose his crown if he attempted to carry it into effect. You may subjugate an aristocracy by striking off a few heads, but you cannot quell a hydra with a thousand claws. No, no; insignificant folk cannot be crushed, they lie too flat beneath the foot.—And do you mean to move all these men through the ministers? Between ourselves, they are very poor creatures. You may shift men's interests, you cannot shift men; they make too much outcry, whereas the francs are dumb."

"But, Célestine, if you talk all the time, and if you aim

your wit wide of the mark, we shall never arrive at an understanding——"

"Ah! I see the drift of that analysis of men's administrative ability," she went on, without listening to her husband. "Goodness, you have been sharpening the axe for yourself. *Sainte Vierge!* why did you not consult me? I would at any rate have prevented you from putting a single line on paper; or at the worst, if you wished to have the memorandum, I would have copied it myself, and it should never have left this house. Oh! dear, why did you say nothing to me about it? Just like a man! A man can sleep beside his wife and keep a secret for seven years! He can hide himself from her, poor thing, for seven years and doubt her devotion."

"But," protested Rabourdin, "whenever I have tried to discuss anything with you, for these eleven years, you have cut me short, and immediately brought out your own ideas instead. You know nothing of my work."

"Nothing? I know all about it!"

"Then, pray, tell me about it," cried Rabourdin, losing his temper for the first time since his marriage.

"There! it is half-past six; shave yourself and dress," she retorted, answering him after the wont of women when pressed upon a point on which they are bound to be silent; "I will finish dressing, and we will postpone the argument, for I do not want to be worried on my reception day.—Oh, dear me, poor man," she said to herself as she went, "to think that he should toil for seven years to bring about his own ruin! And put no trust in his wife."

She turned back.

"If you had listened to me in time," she said, "you would not have interfered on behalf of your first clerk; he, no doubt, took the copies of that unlucky list. Good-bye, clever man!"

But seeing her husband's pain in his tragic attitude, she felt that she had gone too far; she sprang to him, and put her arms about him lovingly, all covered with soap as he was.

"Dear Xavier, do not be vexed," she said, "this evening we will go through your scheme; you shall talk at your ease, and I am going to listen as long and as attentively as you please!—Is that nice of me? There, I do not ask better than to be Mahomet's wife."

She began to laugh, and Rabourdin could not help laughing too, for Célestine's mouth was white with soap, while there was a wealth of the truest and most perdurable affection in the tones of her voice.

"Go and dress, little one; and of all things, not a word of this to des Lupeaulx! Give me your promise. That is the only penance I require——"

"*Require?* Then I won't make any promise at all."

"Come, Célestine, I spoke seriously though I was joking."

"To-night your secretary-general will know the foes with whom we must fight; and I know whom to attack."

"Whom?" asked Rabourdin.

"The Minister," she said, growing two feet taller for her words.

But in spite of Célestine's winning charm, a few painful thoughts occurred to Rabourdin in spite of himself, and darkened his forehead.

"When will she learn to appreciate me?" he thought. "She did not even understand that all this work was done for her sake. What waywardness! and how intelligent she is!—If I were not married, I should be very well off and in a high position by this time. I should have put by five thousand francs a year out of my salary; and by investing the money carefully, I should have an independent income of ten thousand francs at this day. I should be a bachelor; I should stand a chance to become somebody; through a marriage—— Yes" (he interrupted himself), "but I have Célestine and the two children."

He fell back upon his happiness. Even in the happiest married life, there must always be some moments of regret.

He went to the drawing-room and looked round.

"There are not two women in Paris who can manage as

she does. All this on twelve thousand livres a year!" he thought, as he glanced at the jars full of flowers, and thought of the coming pleasure of gratified vanity. "She was meant to be a Minister's wife. And when I think that my Minister's wife is of no use to him—she looks like a stout homely housewife—and when she goes to the Tuileries, to other people's houses, she——"

He compressed his lips. A very busy man's ideas of housekeeping are so vague, that it is easy to persuade him to believe that a hundred thousand francs will do everything or nothing.

But though des Lupeaulx was impatiently expected, though the dinner had been designed to tickle the palate of a professed epicure, he only came in at midnight, at which hour conversation is wont to grow more personal and confidential. Andoche Finot, journalist, was there likewise.

"I know all about it," began des Lupeaulx, when he was comfortable settled on the settee by the fireside, with a cup of tea in his hand; and Mme. Rabourdin stood before him holding out a plate full of sandwiches and slices of the weighty substance not inappropriately known as pound-cake. —"Finot, my dear and intelligent friend, you may do our gracious queen a service by letting loose some of your pack on some men whom I am going to mention."—Then turning to M. Rabourdin, and lowering his voice so that the words should not travel beyond the three persons to whom they were addressed, he continued—"You have the money-lenders and the clergy, capital and the Church, against you. The paragraph in the Liberal paper was inserted at the instance of an old bill-discounter; the proprietors lay under some obligation to him, and the little fellow that actually did it did not think that it mattered very much. The whole staff of the paper is to be reconstituted in three days; we shall get over that. The Royalist Opposition (for, thanks to M. de Chateaubriand, we now have a Royalist Opposition, which is to say, that there are Royalists half-way over to the Liberals; but do not let us talk of mighty matters in politics),—the Royal Opposition,

I say, hating Charles X. with a deadly hate, have promised their support to you, if we will pass one of their amendments. All my batteries are in the field. If they try to force Baudoyer upon us, we will say to the Grand Almonry, 'Such and such newspapers and Messrs. So-and-so will attack this law that you want to pass, and you will have the whole press against you' (for the Ministerial papers under my control shall be deaf and dumb; and as they are pretty much deaf and dumb already—eh, Finot?—that will give them no difficulty). 'Nominate Rabourdin, and you will have public opinion with you.' To think of the poor simple provincials that intrench themselves in their armchairs by the fireside and rejoice over the independence of the organs of opinion! Ha! ha!"

"He! he! he!" chuckled Finot.

"So be quite easy," continued des Lupeaulx. "I arranged it all this evening. The Grand Almonry will give way."

"I would rather have given up all hope and have had you here at dinner," Célestine whispered, and the look of reproach in her eyes might easily have been taken for a love-distraught glance.

"Here is something that will obtain my pardon," returned he, and he gave her the invitation for the party on Tuesday. Célestine face lighted up with the reddest glow of pleasure, as she opened the envelope. No delight can be compared with the joy of vanity triumphant.

"Do you know what a Tuesday is?" continued des Lupeaulx, with an air of mystery; "it is an inner circle; it is to our department as the Petit-Château is to the Court. You will be in the very centre. The Comtesse Féraud will be there (she is still in favor in spite of the death of Louis XVIII.); Delphine de Nucingen, Mme. de Listomère, and the Marquise d'Espard are invited, so is your dear de Camps; I sent the invitation myself, so that you might find a supporter in her in case the other women should 'black ball' you I should like to see you among them."

Célestine tossed her head; she looked like a thoroughbred

before the race. Again she read the card, as Baudoyer and Saillard had read their paragraphs in the paper; and, like them, she could not grasp the meaning of the words.

"This first, and some day the Tuileries!" she said, turning to des Lupeaulx with such ambition and confidence in her tone and manner that she struck dismay into him as he looked at her.

"How if I should only be a stepping-stone for her?" he asked himself.

He rose to his feet and went to her bedroom; she followed, for she understood by his sign that he wished to speak with her in private.

"Well, and the scheme?" he began.

"Pooh! an honest man's folly! He wants to put down fifteen thousand employés and keep a staff of five or six thousand. You could not imagine a more monstrous absurdity; I will give you his memoranda to read when they are copied out. He is quite in earnest. He made his analytical catalogue with the best of motives. The poor, dear man!"

Des Lupeaulx felt the more reassured because genuine laughter accompanied the light contemptuous words; a lie would not have deceived him, he was too old a hand, but Célestine was sincere while she thus spoke.

"But, after all, there is something at the bottom of it all," he rejoined.

"Oh, well, he wants to do away with the land-tax and replace it by a tax upon articles of consumption."

"Why, François Keller and Nucingen brought forward an almost identical plan a year ago; and the Minister is thinking of removing the burden from the land."

"There! I told him that there was nothing new in the idea," laughed Célestine.

"Yes; but if he and the great financier of the age, the Napoleon of finance (I can say so between ourselves), if he and Nucingen have hit upon the same idea, he must at any rate have some notion of the way of carrying it out."

"The whole thing is commonplace," she said, pursing up

her lips disdainfully. "He wants to govern France (just think of it!) with five or six thousand employés; when, on the contrary, it ought to be to the interest of every person in the country to maintain the present government."

Des Lupeaulx seemed relieved to find that the chief clerk, whom he took for a man of extraordinary ability, was a mediocrity after all.

"Are you quite sure of the appointment? Do you care to take a piece of woman's advice?" asked she.

"You women understand the art of polite treachery better than we do," said des Lupeaulx, shaking his head.

"Very well; say 'Baudoyer' at Court and at the Grand Almonry, so as to lull suspicion; but at the last moment write 'Rabourdin.'"

"Some women say 'Yes' so long as they need a man, and 'No' when he has served their turn," remarked des Lupeaulx.

"I know them," Célestine answered, laughing. "But they are very silly, for in politics you must come across the same people again and again. It is all very well with fools, but you are a clever man. In my opinion, it is the greatest possible mistake in life to quarrel with a really clever man."

"No," said des Lupeaulx, "for he will forgive. There is no danger except with petty rancorous minds that have nothing to do but plan revenge, and I spend my life on that."

When every one had gone, Rabourdin stayed in his wife's room, begged her to listen to him for once, and took the opportunity of explaining his scheme. He made her understand that he had no intention of diminishing the estimates; on the contrary, he gave a list of public enterprises to be carried out with the public money; private enterprise or local improvements should be subsidized by a government grant of one-third or one-fourth of the total outlay, and these grants would set money in circulation. In short, he made it plain to his wife that his scheme was not so much a theory on paper as a practicable plan to be worked out in hundreds of ways.

Célestine's enthusiasm grew; she sprang to her husband and put her arms about him, and sat on his knee beside the fire.

"And so, after all," she said, "I have found the husband of whom I dreamed. My ignorance of your worth saved you from des Lupeaulx's clutches. I slandered you to him amazingly, and in good earnest too."

There were happy tears in Rabourdin's eyes. And so at last he had his day of triumph. He had undertaken it all to please his wife; he was a great man in the eyes of his public.

"And for any one who knows how good and kind and loving and equable you are, you are ten times greater! But a man of genius is always more or less of a child, and you are a child," she said, a dearly-loved child."

She drew out her invitation card from its hiding-place and showed it to him:

"This is what I wanted," she continued. "Des Lupeaulx has brought me in contact with His Excellency, and His Excellency shall be my servant for a while, even if he is made of bronze."

Next day Célestine was absorbed in preparations for her introduction into the inner circle. It was to be her great day, her success. Never did courtesan take more pains with herself than this matron took. Never was dressmaker more tormented, more sensible how much depended upon her art. Mme. Rabourdin overlooked nothing, in short. She went herself to choose a brougham for the occasion, so that her carriage should be neither old-fashioned, nor insolent, nor suggestive of the city madam. Her servant, as became the servant of a good house, was to look like a gentleman.

Then, about ten o'clock on the great Tuesday evening, Mme. Rabourdin emerged in an exquisite mourning toilet. In her hair she wore bunches of jet grapes, of the finest workmanship, part of a complete set of ornaments ordered at Fossin's by an Englishwoman who went away without taking them. The leaves were thin flakes of stamped iron, light as real vine-leaves, and the artist had not forgotten the little graceful tendrils that clung among her curls, as the vine-

tendrils cling to every branch. The bracelets and earrings were of "Berlin iron," as it is called; but the delicate arabesques from Vienna might have been made by the hands of fairies for some task-mistress, some Carabosse with a passion for collecting ants' eyes, or for spinning pieces of stuff to pack into a hazel-nut. Célestine's dress had been carefully cut to bring out all the grace of a slender figure, which looked slenderer still in black. The curves all stopped short at the line round the neck, for she wore no shoulder-straps; at every moment she seemed about to emerge like a butterfly from the sheath; yet, through the dressmaker's skill, the gown clung to the lines of her figure. The material was not yet known in Paris; it was a *mousseline de laine,* an "adorable" stuff that afterwards became the rage. Indeed, the success outlasted the fashion in France; for the practical advantages of a thin woolen material, which saves the expense of washing, injured the cotton-spinning industry and revolutionized the Rouen trade. Célestine's feet were daintily shod in Turkey satin slippers (for bright satin could not be worn in mourning) and fine thin stockings.

Célestine looked very lovely thus dressed. Her complexion was brilliant and softly colored, thanks to the reviving influence of a bran bath. Hope had flooded her eyes, her quick intelligence sparkled in them; she looked like the woman of a superior order, of whom des Lupeaulx spoke with such pride and pleasure. She knew how to enter a room; all women will appreciate the meaning of that phrase. She bowed gracefully to the Minister's wife, deference and dignity blended in the right proportion in her manner; and wore her air of majesty without giving offence, for every fair woman is a queen. With the Minister she used the pretty insolence that women are wont to assume with any male creature, were he a grand-duke. And as she took her seat, she reconnoitered the ground. She found herself in a small, carefully chosen circle in which women can measure each other and form accurate judgments; the lightest word reverberates in all ears, every glance makes an impression, and conversation becomes

a duel before witnesses. Any remark pitched in the ordinary key sounds flat; and good talk is quietly accepted as a matter of course at that intellectual level. Rabourdin betook himself to an adjoining card-room, and there remained, planted on both feet, to watch the play, which proves that he was not wanting in sense.

"My dear," said the Marquise d'Espard, turning to the Comtesse Féraud, Louis XVIII.'s last mistress, "Paris is unique. Such women as this start up in it quite unexpectedly from no one knows where, and seemingly they have the will and the power to do anything——"

"And she has the will and the power to do anything," said des Lupeaulx, bridling as he spoke.

The crafty Célestine, meanwhile, was paying court to the Minister's wife. Drilled by des Lupeaulx on the previous day, she knew all the Countess' weaknesses and flattered them, without seeming to touch upon them. And she was silent too at the right moment; for des Lupeaulx, in spite of his infatuation, had noticed Célestine's shortcomings, and warned her against them. "Of all things, do not talk too much!" he had said the evening before. 'Twas an extraordinary proof of attachment. Bertrand Barrère left behind him the sublime maxim, "Never interrupt a woman with advice while she is dancing;" which, with the supplementary apophthegm here subjoined, "Do not find fault with a woman for scattering her pearls," may be said to complete this article of the code feminine. The conversation became general. From time to time Mme. Rabourdin put in a word, much as a well-trained cat touches her mistress' lace, with sheathed claws. The Minister's heart was not very susceptible; in the matter of gallantry, no statesman of the Restoration was more accomplished; the Opposition *Miroir,* the *Pandore,* and the *Figaro* could not reproach him with the faintest acceleration of the pulse. His mistress was *L'Étoile;* strange to say, she had been faithful in adversity, and probably was reaping the benefit even at this moment. This Mme. Rabourdin knew, but she knew also that people change

their minds in old châteaux, so she set herself to make the Minister jealous of such good fortune as des Lupeaulx appeared to enjoy. At that moment des Lupeaulx was expatiating upon Célestine, for the benefit of the Marquise d'Espard, Mme. de Nucingen, and the Countess; he was trying to make them understand that Mme. Rabourdin must be admitted into their coalition; and Mme. de Camps, the fourth in the quartette of listeners, was supporting him. At the end of an hour the Minster had been well stroked down; he was pleased with Mme. Rabourdin's wit, and she had charmed his wife; indeed, the Countess was so enchanted with this siren, that she asked her to come whenever she pleased.

"For your husband will very soon be head of the division, my dear," she had said, "and the Minister intends to bring both the divisions under one head, and then you will be one of us."

His Excellency took Mme. Rabourdin to see one of the rooms. His suite of apartments was famous in those days, for Opposition journalism had made itself ridiculous by denouncing the lavish display therein. He gave his arm to the lady.

"Indeed, madame, you really ought to favor us, the Countess and myself, by coming frequently——" and His Excellency brought out his Ministerial pretty speeches.

"But, monseigneur," demurred Célestine, with one of the glances that women keep for emergencies; "but, monseigneur, that depends upon you, it seems to me."

"How?"

"Why, you can give me the right to do so."

"Explain yourself."

"No. When I came here, I said to myself that I would not have the bad taste to solicit your interest."

"Pray, speak! *Placets* of this sort are never out of place," the Minister answered, laughing. And nothing amuses your seriously-minded men so much as this kind of nonsense.

"Very well; it is rather absurd of a chief clerk's wife to come here often, but a director's wife would not be 'out of place.'"

"Never mind that," said the Minister, "we cannot do without your husband; he has been nominated."

"Really and truly?"

"Will you come to my study and see his name for yourself? The thing is done."

It seemed to her that there was something suspicious in the Minister's eagerness and alacrity.

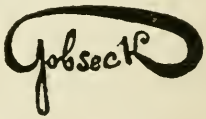
"Well," she said, as they stood apart in a corner, "let me tell you that I can repay you——"

She was on the point of unfolding her husband's scheme, when des Lupeaulx came forward on tiptoe with an angry little cough, which, being interpreted, meant that he had been listening to their conversation, and did not wish to be found out. The Minister looked in no pleasant humor at the elderly coxcomb thus caught in a trap. Des Lupeaulx had hurried on the work of the staff beyond all reason, in his impatience for his conquest; he had put it in the Minister's hands, and next day he intended to bring the nomination to her who passed for his mistress.

Just at that moment the Minister's footman came, and with a mysterious air informed des Lupeaulx that his own man had brought a letter to be delivered to him immediately, adding that it was of great importance.

The Secretary-General went to a lamp and read a missive thus conceived:

"Contrary to my habit, I am waiting in an ante-chamber; there is not a moment to lose if you mean to arrange with your servant



The Secretary-General shuddered at the sight of that signature. It would be a pity not to give a facsimile of it, for it is rare on the market, and should be valuable to those persons who discover character in handwriting. If ever

hieroglyph represented an animal, surely this name, with its initial and final letter, suggests the voracious insatiable jaws of a shark, jaws that are always agape, always catching hold of the strong and the weak alike, and gobbling them down. It has been found impossible to reproduce the whole note in facsimile, for the handwriting, though clear, is to small and close and fine; the whole sentence, indeed, only fills one line. The spirit of bill-discounting alone could inspire so insolently imperative, so cruelly irreproachable a sentence; an explicit yet non-committal statement, which told all yet revealed nothing. If you had never heard of Gobseck before, you might have guessed what manner of man it was that wrote that line; and seen the implacable money-lender of the Rue des Grès, who could summons you into his presence without sending an order. Accordingly, des Lupeaulx straightway disappeared, like a dog when the sportsman calls him off the scent; and went to his own abode, pondering by the way. His whole position seemed to be compromised. Picture to yourself the sensations of a general-in-chief when his aide-de-camp announces that "the enemy with thirty thousand men, all fresh troops, is taking us in flank"! A word will explain the arrival of Messieurs Gigonnet and Gobseck upon the field; for both those worthies were waiting upon des Lupeaulx.

At eight o'clock that evening, Martin Falleix had arrived on the wings of the wind (thanks to three francs per stage and a postilion sent on ahead). He had brought the contracts, which all bore yesterday's date. Mitral took the documents at once to the Café Thémis; they were duly handed over, and the two money-lenders hurried off to des Lupeaulx. They went on foot, however. The clock struck eleven.

Des Lupeaulx shuddered as he watched the two sinister-looking faces light up with a gleeful expression, and saw a look that shot out straight as a bullet, and blazed like the flash of powder.

"Well, my masters, what is the matter?"

The two money-lenders sat motionless and impassive.

Gigonnet glanced from his bundle of papers to the man-servant.

"Let us go into my study," said des Lupeaulx, dismissing the man with a sign.

"You understand French admirably," remarked Gigonnet.

"Have you come to torment a man that put you in the way of making two hundred thousand francs apiece?" asked des Lupeaulx, and in spite of himself his gesture was disdainful.

"And will put us in the way of making more, I hope," said Gigonnet.

"Is it a bit of business? If you want me, I have a memory."

"And we have memoranda of yours," riposted Gigonnet.

"My debts will be paid," des Lupeaulx returned loftily. He did not wish to be led into a discussion on the subject.

"Truly?" asked Gobseck.

"Let us go to the point, my son," said Gigonnet. "Don't you draw yourself up in your stock like that; it won't do with us. Take these contracts and read them through."

Des Lupeaulx read with surprise and amazement; angels might have flung those contracts down from the clouds for him; and meanwhile the pair took stock of his room.

"You have a couple of intelligent men of business in us, haven't you?" asked Gigonnet.

"But to what do I owe such ingenious co-operation?" des Lupeaulx inquired uneasily.

"We knew, a week ago, what you will not know till to-morrow unless we tell you: the President of the Commercial Court finds that he is obliged to resign his seat in the Chamber."

Des Lupeaulx's eyes dilated till they grew as large as meadow daisies.

"Your Minister was playing this trick upon you," added Gobseck, the curt-spoken.

"You are my masters," said des Lupeaulx, saluting the

pair with a profound respect in which there was a certain tinge of irony.

"Precisely," said Gobseck.

"But are you about to strangle me?"

"That is possible."

"Very well, then; set about it, you executioners!" returned the Secretary-General with a smile.

"Your debts," began Gigonnet, "are inscribed along with the loan of the purchase-money, you see."

"Here are the deeds," added Gobseck, as he drew a bundle of documents from the pocket of his faded greatcoat.

"And you have three years to pay the lot," said Gigonnet.

"But what do you want?" asked des Lupeaulx, much alarmed by so much readiness to oblige, and such a fancy settlement.

"La Billardière's place for Baudoyer," Gigonnet answered quickly.

"It is a very small thing," returned des Lupeaulx, "though I should have to do the impossible. I myself have tied my hands."

"You are going to gnaw the cords with your teeth," said Gigonnet.

"They are sharp enough!" added Gobseck.

"Is that all?"

"We shall keep the contracts until these claims are admitted," said Gigonnet, laying a statement under the Secretary-General's eyes as he spoke; "if these are not recognized within six days by the committee, my name will be filled in instead of yours on the deeds."

"You are clever," exclaimed des Lupeaulx.

"Precisely," said Gobseck.

"And that is all?"

"True," replied Gobseck.

"Is it a bargain?" demanded Gigonnet.

Des Lupeaulx nodded.

"Very well, then, sign this power of attorney," said Gigonnet. "Baudoyer's nomination in two days; the admission of the claims in six, and——"

"And what?"

"We guarantee you——"

"What?" cried des Lupeaulx, more and more astonished.

"*Your* nomination," replied Gigonnet, swelling with pride. "We are secure of a majority; fifty-two tenant-farmers and tradesmen are ready to vote at the election as the lender of the money may direct."

Des Lupeaulx grasped Gobseck's hand.

"We are the only people among whom misapprehensions are impossible. This is what you may call business. So I will throw in a make-weight."

"Precisely" (from Gobseck).

"What is it to be?" asked Gigonnet.

"The cross for your oaf of a nephew."

"Good!" said Gigonnet. "You know him."

With that the pair took their leave. Des Lupeaulx went with them to the stairs.

"Those are secret envoys from some foreign power!" said the footmen among themselves.

Out in the street the money-lenders looked in each other's face by the light of a lamp and laughed.

"He will have to pay us nine thousand francs per annum in the shape of interest, and the land scarcely brings in five thousand nett," cried Gigonnet.

"He will be in our hands for a long while to come," said Gobseck.

"He will begin to build; he will do foolish things," returned Gigonnet. "Falleix will buy the land."

"He wants to be a deputy; the wolf" (*le loup*) "laughs at the rest."

"Eh! eh!"

"Eh! eh!"

The dry chirping exclamations did duty for laughter. The usurers returned on foot to the Café Thémis.

Des Lupeaulx went back to the drawing-room and found Mme. Rabourdin in all her glory. She was charming. The Minister's countenance, usually so melancholy, had relaxed and grown gracious.

"She is working miracles," des Lupeaulx said to himself. "What an invaluable woman! One must probe to the bottom of her heart."

"Your little lady will decidedly do very well indeed," said the Marquise; "she wants nothing but your name."

"Yes, she is an auctioneer's daughter; it is the one thing against her; her want of birth will be the ruin of her." Des Lupeaulx's air of cool indifference contrasted strangely with his warmth of a few minutes ago.

The Marquise d'Espard looked steadily back at him.

"The glance you gave them just now was not lost upon me," she said, indicating the Minister and Mme. Rabourdin; "it pierced through the mist of your eyeglasses. You are amusing, you two, to quarrel over that bone."

As the Marquise made her way past the door, the Minister hurried across the room to her.

"Well," said des Lupeaulx, addressing Mme. Rabourdin, "what do you think of our Minister?"

"He is charming. Really," she added, raising her voice for the benefit of His Excellency's wife, "really, the poor ministers must be known to be appreciated. The minor newspapers and the slanders of the Opposition give one such distorted ideas of politicians, and in the end one is influenced. But the prejudice turns in their favor when you meet them."

"He is very pleasant."

"Well, I can assure you that one could be very fond of him," she returned good-humoredly.

"Dear child," said des Lupeaulx, assuming a good-natured and ingratiating air, "you have achieved the impossible."

"What?" asked she.

"You have raised the dead to life, I did not think that he had a heart; ask his wife! He has just enough to defray a passing fancy, but take advantage of it. Come this way; do not be surprised."

He led the way to boudoir and sat down beside her on a sofa.

"You are crafty," he said, "and I like you the better for it. Between ourselves, you are no ordinary woman. Des Lupeaulx introduced you here, and there is an end of him; is it not so? And besides, when we decide to love for interest, a minister of seventy is to be preferred to a secretary-general of forty; it pays better, and is less irksome. I wear eyeglasses, and my hair is powdered, and I am the worse for a life of pleasure; a romantic love affair it would be! Oh! I have told myself all this. If one absolutely must, one makes some concession to the useful, but I shall never be the agreeable, shall I? A man in my position would be mad if he did not look at it from all sides. You can confess the truth, and show me the bottom of your heart. We are two partners, not two lovers; are we not? If there is some fancy on my side, you rise superior to such trifles; you will pass it over in me; you are not a little boarding-school miss, nor a tradesman's wife from the Rue Saint-Denis. Pooh! we are above that, you and I. There is the Marquise d'Espard, now leaving the room, do you suppose that she thinks otherwise? We came to an understanding two years ago" (the coxcomb!), "and now she has only to write me a line, and not a very long one—'My dear des Lupeaulx, you will oblige me by doing so-and-so'—and the thing is done forthwith. We are thinking of bringing a petition for a commission in lunacy on her husband. You women can have anything that you will at the cost of pleasure. Well, then, dear child, take His Excellency with your wiles; I will help you, it is to my interest to do so. Yes, I should like to have him under a woman's influence; he would never slip through my fingers then, as he sometimes does, and naturally, for I only keep a hold on his common-sense, but with a pretty woman to help me, I should have him on his weak side, and that is the surest. So let us be good friends as before, and divide the credit that you will gain." Mme. Rabourdin heard this singular profession of rascality with the utmost astonishment. The barefaced simplicity of the political business transaction put any idea of expressing surprise quite out of the question. She fell into the snare.

"Do you think that I have made any impression upon him?" she asked.

"I know you have, I am sure of it."

"Is it true that Rabourdin's appointment is signed?"

"I put the report before him this morning. But it is nothing to be the head of the division; he must be Master of Requests."

"Yes."

"Very well, go in again and flirt with His Excellency."

"Indeed," she said, "I never really knew you till to-night. There is nothing commonplace about you."

"And so, we are two old friends, and there is an end of tender airs and tiresome love-making; we understand things as they used to do under the Regency; they had plenty of sense in those days."

"You are in truth a great man, I admire you," she said, smiling at him as she held out her hand. "You shall know that a woman does more for her friend than for her——"

She left the sentence unfinished and went.

"Dear little thing! Des Lupeaulx need feel no remorse over turning against you," said her companion, as he watched her cross the room to the Minister. "To-morrow evening when you hand me a cup of tea, you will offer me something else which I shall not care to take.—There is no more to be said. Ah! when you come to your fortieth year, women take you in; it is too late to be loved."

Des Lupeaulx also went back to the drawing-room, scanned himself in a mirror, and knew that he was a very fine fellow for political purposes, but unmistakably superannuated for the Court of Cytherea. Mme. Rabourdin meanwhile was working up her climax; she meditated taking her departure. and did her best to leave a last pleasing impression upon every one present. She succeeded. An unwonted exclamation of "Charming woman!" broke from every one as soon as she had gone, and the Minister went with her to the farthest door.

"I am quite sure that you will think of me to-morrow,"

he said, alluding to the nomination.—"I am quite satisfied with our acquisition, not many high officials have such charming wives," he added, as he came back to the room.

"Do you not think that she is inclined to encroach a little?" des Lupeaulx began. He seemed rather put out.

The women exchanged meaning glances; the rivalry between the Secretary-General and the Minister amused them. And forthwith they began one of those charming mystifications in which the Parisienne excels. They all began to talk about Mme. Rabourdin; they stirred up the Minister and des Lupeaulx. One lady thought Mme. Rabourdin too studied, she aimed too much at wit; another began to compare the graces of the bourgeoisie with the manners of persons of fashion, criticising Célestine by implication; and des Lupeaulx defended the mistress attributed to him, but his defence was of a kind reserved exclusively in polite society for absent enemies.

"Pray be fair to her, mesdames! Is it not an extraordinary thing that an auctioneer's daughter should be so charming? You see where she comes from, and where she is; and she will go to the Tuileries, she is aiming at that, she told me so."

"And if she is an auctioneer's daughter," said Mme. d'Espard, smiling over her words, "how should that injure her husband's prospects?"

"As times are, you mean?" asked the Minister's wife, pursing up her lips.

"Madame," the Minister said sternly, turning on the Marquise, "such language brings on revolutions, and, unfortunately, the Court spares no one. You would not believe how much the heedlessness of the upper classes displeases certain clear-sighted persons at the Château. If I were a great lord, instead of a little provincial of good family, set here, as it would seem, to do your business for you, the Monarchy should rest on a firmer basis than it does at present. What will be the end if the throne cannot shed its lustre upon its representatives? We are far indeed from the times when the King's will ennobled a Louvois, a Colbert, a Richelieu, a

Jeannin, a Villeroy, or a Sully. Yes, Sully in the beginning was nothing more than I. I speak in this way because we are among ourselves, and I should be small indeed if I took offence at such trifles. It rests with us, and not with others, to make a great name for ourselves."

"You have the appointment, dear," said Célestine, squeezing her husband's hand. "If it had not been for des Lupeaulx, I would have explained your project to the Minister; but that must be left till next Tuesday now, and you will be Master of Requests all the sooner."

There is one day in every woman's life in which she shines in all her glory—a day that she remembers, and loves to remember, as long as she lives. As Mme. Rabourdin undid her artfully adjusted ornaments one by one, she went over that evening again, and reckoned it among the glorious days of her life. All her beauty had been jealously noted; the Minister's wife had paid her compliments (she was not ill-pleased to praise the newcomer at the expense of her friends); and more than all, satisfied vanity had redounded to her husband's advantage. Xavier's appointment had been made!

"Did I not look well to-night?" she asked her husband, as though there were any need to kindle his admiration.

At that very moment Mitral at the Café Thémis saw the two usurers come in. Their impassive faces gave no sign.

"How are we getting on?" he asked, when they sat down to the table.

"Oh, well, as usual," said Gigonnet, rubbing his hands; "victory is on the side of the francs."

"That is so," remarked Gobseck.

Mitral lost no time. He took a cab and drove away with the news. The game of boston had been long drawn out that night at the Saillards', but every one had left except the Abbé Gaudron. Falleix had gone to bed; he was tired out.

"You will get the appointment, nephew, and there is a surprise in store for you."

"What?" asked Saillard.

"The Cross!" cried Mitral.

"God is with those that care for His altars!" commented Gaudron.

And thus was the *Te Deum* chanted with equal joy in either camp.

Next day was Friday. M. Rabourdin was to go to the Minister, for he had done the work of the head of the division ever since the late la Billardière fell ill. On these occasions the clerks were remarkably punctual, the office-messengers zealous and attentive, for on signature days the offices are all in a flurry. Why and wherefore? Nobody knows. The three messengers accordingly were all at their posts; they flattered themselves that fees of some sort would come their way, for rumors of M. Rabourdin's appointment had been spread abroad on the previous day by des Lupeaulx. So Uncle Antoine and Laurent were in full dress at a quarter to eight when the Secretary's messenger came over with a note, asking Antoine to give it, in private, to M. Dutocq. The Secretary-General had bidden him take it round to the first clerk's house at seven o'clock. "And I don't know how it happened, old man, but I slept on and on, and I am only just awake now. He would give me an infernal blowing up if he knew that the note had not gone to the private address; 'stead of which I shall tell him as how I took it to M. Dutocq's. It is a great secret, Daddy Antoine. Don't say anything to the clerks; or, my word, he would turn me away. I should lose my place if I said a word about it, he said."

"Why, what is there inside it?"

"Nothing; for I looked into it, like this—there!"

He pressed open the folded sheet, but they could only see white paper inside.

"To-day is a great day for you, Laurent," continued the Secretary's messenger. "You are going to have a new director. They will retrench beyond a doubt, and put both divisions under one director; messengers may look out!"

"Yes! nine clerks pensioned off," said Dutocq, coming up at the moment. "How came you fellows to know that?"

Antoine handed over the letter, Dutocq opened it, and rushed headlong down the staircase to the Secretary's rooms.

Since the day of M. de la Billardière's death, the Rabourdins and Baudoyers had settled down by degrees into their wonted ways and the *dolce-far-niente* habits of administrative routine. There had been plenty of gossip at first; but an access of industry usually sets in among the clerks towards the end of the year, and the doorkeepers and messengers become more unctuously obsequious about the same time. Everybody was punctual of a morning, and more faces might be seen in the office after four o'clock; for the bonus at the New Year is apt to depend upon the final impression left on the mind of your chief. Then rumor said that the la Billardière and Clergeot divisions were to be brought under one head. The news had caused a flutter in the department on the previous day. The number of clerks to be dismissed was known, but no one knew their names as yet. It was pretty certain that Poiret would not be replaced—they would effect an economy over his salary. Young la Billardière had gone. Two new supernumeraries were coming, and both were sons of deputies—an appalling circumstance. This tidings had arrived just as they were going away. It struck terror into every conscience. And so for the first half-hour, as the clerks were dropping in, there was talk round about the stoves.

Des Lupeaulx was shaving when Dutocq appeared; he did not put down his razor as he gave the clerk a glance with the air of a general that issues an order.

"Are we by ourselves?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Go for Rabourdin; walk ahead, and hold on. You must have kept a copy of that list."

"Yes."

"*Inde iræ*—you understand. We must have a general hue and cry. Try to invent something to raise a clamor."

"I can have a caricature drawn, but I have not five hundred francs to pay for it."

"Who will draw it?"

"Bixiou."

"He shall have a thousand francs and the assistant's place under Colleville. Colleville will come to an understanding with him."

"But he will not believe me."

"You want to mix me up in it perhaps? It is that or nothing—do you understand?"

"If M. Baudoyer is director, he might possibly lend the money——"

"Yes, he is going to be director. Leave me, and be quick about it. Don't seem as if you had been to see me. Go down by the back stairs."

Dutocq went back to the office, his heart throbbing with joy. He was wondering how to raise an outcry against his chief without committing himself, when Bixiou looked in just to wish his friends the Rabourdins good-day. Having given up his wager for lost, it pleased that practical joker to pose as though he had won.

Bixiou (*mimicking Phellion's voice*). "Gentlemen, I present my compliments to you, and wish you collectively a good-day. I appoint the coming Sunday for the dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale.* But a serious dilemma presents itself: are the retiring clerks to come or not?"

Poiret. "Yes; even those that are pensioned off."

Bixiou. "It is all one to me; I shall not have to pay for it" (*general amazement*). "Baudoyer has been appointed. I should love to hear him calling Laurent at this moment." (*Mimics Baudoyer.*) "'Laurent, lock up my hair-shirt, and my scourge along with it!'" (*peals of laughter from the clerks.*) "*Ris d'aboyeur d'oie!* There is sense in Colleville's anagrams, for Xavier Rabourdin's name makes *D'abord rêva bureaux e u fin riche,* you know. If my name happened to be 'Charles X., by the grace of God King of France and Navarre,' I should quake for fear lest my anagram might come true likewise."

Thuillier. "Oh, come now, you want to make fun of it!"

BIXIOU (*laughing in his face*). "*Ris-au-laid!* (*riz-au-lait*). That is neat, Daddy Thuillier, for you are not good-looking. Rabourdin is sending in his resignation in a fury because Baudoyer is director."

VIMEUX (*coming in*). "What stuff! I have just been repaying Antoine thirty or forty francs, and he tells me that M. and Mme. Rabourdin were at the Minister's private party last night, and stopped till a quarter to twelve. His Excellency came as far as the stairs with Mme. Rabourdin. She was divinely dressed, it seems. He is director in fact, and no mistake. Riffé, the confidential copying-clerk, stopped late to finish the report sooner. There is no mystery about it now. M. Clergeot is retiring. After thirty years of service, it is no disgrace. M. Cochin, who is well-to-do——"

BIXIOU. "He makes cochineal (*cochenille*), according to Colleville."

VIMEUX. "Why, he is in the cochineal trade; he is a partner in Matifat's business in the Rue des Lombards. Well, he is to go, and Poiret is to go. Nobody else is coming on instead. That much is positive. No more is known. M. Rabourdin's appointment came this morning. They are afraid of intrigues."

BIXIOU. "What sort of intrigues?"

FLEURY. "Baudoyer, begad! The clericals are backing him up. There is something new here in the Liberal paper; it is only a couple of lines, but it is funny"—(*reads*)—" 'In the *foyer* of the Italiens yesterday there was some talk of M. de Chateaubriand's return to office. This belief was founded upon the appointment of M. Rabourdin to fill the post originally intended for M. Baudoyer—M. Rabourdin being a protégé of the Vicomte's friends. The clerical party would never have withdrawn except to make a compromise with the great man of letters.' Scum of the earth!"

DUTOCQ (*comes in after listening outside*). "Scum! Who? Rabourdin. Then you have heard the news?"

FLEURY (*rolling his eyes fiercely*). "Rabourdin!—scum!

Have you taken leave of your wits, Dutocq? And do you want a bullet for ballast in your brains?"

DUTOCQ. "I did not say a word against M. Rabourdin; only just now, out in the courtyard, it was told me as a secret that he had been informing against a good many of the staff, and had given notes; in short, I was told that he had sent in a report of the departments, and we are all done for; that is why he is in favor——"

PHELLION (*shouts*). "M. Rabourdin is incapable——"

BIXIOU. "Here is a nice state of things! I say, Dutocq?" (*They exchange a word or two, and go out into the corridor.*)

BIXIOU. "What ever can have happened?"

DUTOCQ. "Do you remember the caricature?"

BIXIOU. "Yes; what about it?"

DUTOCQ. "Draw it, and you will be chief clerk's assistant, and you will get something handsome besides. You see, my dear fellow, dissension has been sown in the upper regions. The Minister is pledged to Rabourdin; but if he does not appoint Baudoyer, he will get into trouble with the clergy. Don't you know? The King, the Dauphin, the Dauphiness, the Grand Almonry, the whole Court, in fact, are for Baudoyer; the Minister wants Rabourdin."

BIXIOU. "Good!——"

DUTOCQ. "The Minister has begun to see that he must give way, but he must get quit of the difficulty before he can go over. He wants a reason for ridding himself of Rabourdin. So somebody has unearthed an old report that he made with a view to reforming the service, and some of it is getting about. That is how I try to explain the thing to myself, at least. Do the drawing; you come on in a match played among great folk; you will do a service to the Minister, the Court, and all concerned, and you get your step. Do you understand?"

BIXIOU. "I do not understand how you can know all this, or whether you are just making it up."

DUTOCQ. "Would you like me to show you your paragraph?"

BIXIOU. "Yes."

DUTOCQ. "Very well, come round to my place, for I want to put the report in sure hands."

BIXIOU. "Go by yourself" (*goes back to the Rabourdins*). "People are talking of nothing but this news that Dutocq has brought; upon my honor. M. Rabourdin's notes on the men that he meant to reform out of the service can't have been very complimentary. That is the secret of his promotion. Nothing astonishes us in these days" (*strikes an attitude, after Talma*).

> 'Illustrious heads have fallen before your eyes,
> And yet, oh senseless men! ye show surprise'

—if somebody points out a reason of this sort when a man gets into favor! Our Baudoyer is too stupid to make his way by such methods. Accept my congratulations, gentlemen, you are under an illustrious chief" (*goes*).

POIRET. "I shall retire from the service without understanding a single thing that that gentleman has said since he came here. What does he mean with his falling heads?"

FLEURY. "The four sergeants of La Rochelle, egad! Berton, Ney, Caron, the brothers Faucher, and all the massacres."

PHELLION. "He says risky things in a flippant manner."

FLEURY. "Why don't you say at once that he lies; that he humbugs you; that truth turns to *verdegris* in his throat?"

PHELLION. "Your remarks transgress the limits of politeness and the considerations due to a colleague."

VIMEUX. "It seems to me that if what he says is false, such remarks are called slander and defamation of character, and the man who utters them deserves a horsewhipping."

FLEURY (*waxing wrathful*). "And if a government office were a public place, it would be an indictable offence, and go straight to a court of law."

PHELLION (*anxious to avoid a quarrel, endeavors to change the subject*). "Calm yourselves, gentlemen. I am at work upon a little treatise on morality, and have just come to the soul——"

FLEURY (*interrupting*). "What do you say to it, M. Phellion?"

PHELLION (*reading aloud*). "'*Question.*—What is the soul of man?

"'*Answer.*—A spiritual substance which thinks and reasons.'"

THUILLIER. "A spiritual substance! You might as well say an ethereal block of stone."

POIRET. "Just let him go on——"

PHELLION (*continues*). "'*Q.*—"Whence comes the soul?

"'*A.*—It comes from God, by whom it was created; God made it simple and indivisible, consequently its destructibility is inconceivable, and He has said——'"

POIRET (*bewildered*). "God?"

PHELLION. "Yes, môsieur, tradition says so."

FLEURY (*to Poiret*). "Don't you interrupt!"

PHELLION (*resumes*). "'—has said that He created it immortal, which means that it will never die.

"'*Q.*—To what end does the soul exist?

"'*A.*—To comprehend, to will, and to remember; it comprises the understanding, the will, and the memory.

"'*Q.*—To what end have we understanding?

"'*A.*—That we may know. The understanding is the eye of the soul.'"

FLEURY. "And the soul is the eye of what?"

PHELLION (*continuing*). "'*Q.*—What is the understanding bound to know?

"'*A.*—The truth.

"'*Q.*—Why has man a will?

"'*A.*—In order that he may love good and eschew evil.

"'*Q.*—What is good?

"'*A.*—The source of man's happiness.'"

VIMEUX. "And are you writing this for young ladies?"

PHELLION. "Yes" (*continues*). "'*Q.*—How many kinds of good are there?'"

FLEURY. "This is prodigiously improper!"

PHELLION (*indignantly*). "Oh! môsieur" (*cooling down*).

"Here is the answer, anyhow. I have come to it"—(*reads*)—"'*A.*—There are two kinds of good—temporal good and eternal good.'"

POIRET (*with a contemptuous countenance*). "And will there be a great sale for *that?*"

PHELLION. "I venture to hope so. It takes a lot of mental exercise to keep up a system of questions and answers; that was why I asked you to allow me to think, for the answers——

THUILLIER. "The answers might be sold separately though."

POIRET. "Is it a pun?"

THUILLIER. "Yes. They will sell the gammon without spinach."

PHELLION. "It was very wrong, indeed, of me to interrupt you." (*Dives in among his pasteboard cases.—To himself.*) "But they have forgotten M. Rabourdin."

Meanwhile a scene that took place between the Minister and des Lupeaulx decided Rabourdin's fate. The Secretary-General went to find his chief in his study before breakfast.

"Your Excellency is not playing aboveboard with me," he began, when he had made sure that la Brière could hear nothing.

"Here, he is going to quarrel with me," thought the Minister, "because his mistress flirted with me yesterday." Aloud he said, "I did not think that you were such a boy, my dear friend."

"Friend," repeated the Secretary-General; "I shall soon know about that."

The Minister looked haughtily at des Lupeaulx.

"We are by ourselves, so we can have an explanation. The deputy for the district in which my estate of des Lupeaulx is situated——"

"Then it really is an estate?" laughed the Minister, to hide his surprise.

"Enlarged by purchases to the extent of two hundred thou-

sand francs," des Lupeaulx added carelessly. "You knew ten days ago that the deputy was going to resign his seat, and you said nothing to me—you were not bound to do so; still, you knew very well that it is my wish to sit on the Centre benches. Did you not think that I might throw in my lot with the doctrinaires, the party that will eat you up, Monarchy and all, if they are allowed to recruit all the able men that you slight? Do you not know that there are not more than fifty or sixty dangerous heads at a time in a nation, and that in those fifty or sixty the intellect is on a level with the ambition? The whole art of government consists in finding out those heads, so that you may buy them or cut them off. I do not know whether I have talent, but I have ambition; and you make a blunder when you do not come to an understanding with a man who means nothing but good to you. The coronation dazzled you for a minute, but what follows? The war of words and arguments will begin again and grow more acrimonious. Well, so far as you are concerned, you don't find me in the Left Centre, believe me! Your prefect has had confidential instructions no doubt, but, in spite of his manœuvres, I am sure of a majority. It is time that we came to a thorough understanding. Sometimes people are better friends after a little *coup de Jarnac.* I shall be a Count, and the Grand Cross of the Legion will not be refused after my services; but I insist not so much on these two points as upon a third which your influence can decide. You have not yet appointed Rabourdin; I have had news this morning; you will give general satisfaction by nominating Baudoyer——"

"*Baudoyer!*" exclaimed the Minister; "you know him!"

"Yes," said des Lupeaulx; "but when he gives proof of his incompetence, you can get rid of him by asking his patrons to take him into their employ. Then you will have an important post in your gift, and that may facilitate a compromise with some ambitious man."

"I have given my word to Rabourdin!"

"Yes, but I do not ask you to change your mind at once.

I know that it is dangerous to say 'Yes' and 'No' on the same day. Wait, and you can sign the day after to-morrow. Well, in two days' time you will see that it is impossible to keep Rabourdin; and besides, he will have sent in his resignation, plump and plain."

"Resignation?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"He has been at work for some power unknown, playing the spy on a large scale all through the departments. This was found out by accident; it has got about, and the clerks are furious. For mercy's sake, do not work with him to-day; let me find an excuse. Go to the King, I am sure you will find that certain persons will be pleased by your concession as to Baudoyer, and you will get something in exchange. Then you will strengthen your position later on by getting rid of the fool, seeing that he has been forced upon you, as one may say."

"What made you change your mind about Rabourdin in this way?"

"Would you assist M. de Chateaubriand to write an article against the Government? Well, this is how Rabourdin treats me in his report," said des Lupeaulx, handing his note to the Minister. "He is reorganizing the whole system, no doubt, for the benefit of a confederation which we do not know. I shall keep on friendly terms with him, so as to watch over him. I think I will do some great service to the Government, so as to reach the peerage; a peerage is the one thing that I care about. I do not want office, nor anything else that can cross your path. I am aiming at the peerage; then I shall be in a position to marry some banker's daughter with two hundred thousand livres a year. So let me do you some great service, so that the King can say that I have saved the throne. This long time past I have said, 'Liberalism no longer meets us in the field; Liberalism has given up conspiracy, the Carbonari, and violent methods;' it is undermining us and preparing to say once for all, 'Get thee hence that

I may take thy place!' Do you think that I pay court to a Rabourdin's wife for my pleasure? No; I had information! So for to-day there are two things—the adjournment of the nominations and your *sincere* support at my election. At the end of the session you shall see whether I have not paid my debt with interest."

For all answer the Minister handed over the report.

"And I will tell Rabourdin that you postpone him till Saturday."

The Minister nodded. In a few minutes the messenger had crossed the building and informed Rabourdin that he must go to the Minister on Saturday; for that then the Chamber would be engaged with petitions, and the Minister would have the whole day at liberty.

Meanwhile Saillard went on his errand to the Minister's wife and slipped in his speech, to which the lady replied, with dignity, that she never meddled in State affairs, and besides, she had heard that Rabourdin was appointed. Saillard in alarm went up to Baudoyer's office, and there found Dutocq, Godard, and Bixiou in a state of exasperation which words fail to describe; for they were reading the rough draft of Rabourdin's terrible report.

Bixiou (*pointing to a passage*). "Here you are, Saillard: 'Saillard.—Cashiers to be suppressed throughout. The departments should keep accounts current with the Treasury. Saillard is well-to-do, and does not need a pension.' Would you like to see your son-in-law?" (*turns over the leaf.*) "Here he is: 'Baudoyer.—Utterly incompetent. Dismiss without pension; he is well-to-do.' And our friend Godard" (*turns over another leaf*). "'Godard.—Dismiss. Pension one-third of present salary.' In short, we are all here. Here am I—'An artist to be employed at the Opera, the Menus-Plaisirs, or the Muséum, with a salary from the Civil List. Plenty of ability, not very steady, incapable of application, a restless disposition.' Oh! I will give you enough of the artist."

Saillard. "Cashiers to be suppressed? . . . Why, the man is a monster!"

BIXIOU. "What has he to say about our mysterious Desroys?" (*Turns the leaf and reads.*) "'DESROYS.—A dangerous man, in that he holds subversive principles that cannot be shaken. As a son of a member of the Convention he admires that institution; he may become a pernicious publicist.'"

BAUDOYER. "A detective is not so clever."

GODARD. "I shall go at once to the Secretary-General and lodge a complaint in form. If that man is nominated, we ought all to resign in a body."

DUTOCQ. "Listen, gentlemen; let us be prudent. If you revolt at once, we should be accused of personal motives and a desire for revenge. No, let the rumor spread; and when the whole service rises in protest, your proceedings will meet with general support."

BIXIOU. "Dutocq works on the principles of the sublime Rossini's great *aria* in *Basilio,* which proves that the mighty composer is a politic man. This seems to me to be fair and reasonable. I think of leaving my card on M. Rabourdin to-morrow morning; I shall have the name engraved upon it, and the titles underneath: 'BIXIOU.—Not very steady, incapable of application, restless disposition.'"

GODARD. "A good idea, gentlemen. Let us all have our cards printed, and Rabourdin shall have them to-morrow morning."

BAUDOYER. "M. Bixiou, will you undertake these little details, and see that the plates are destroyed after a single card has been printed from each?"

DUTOCQ (*taking Bixiou aside*). "Well, will you draw that caricature now?"

BIXIOU. "I see, my dear fellow, that you have been in the secret for ten days." (*Looks him full in the face.*) "Am I going to be chief clerk's assistant?"

DUTOCQ. "Yes, upon my word of honor, and a thousand francs besides, as I told you. You do not know what a service you are doing to powerful personages."

BIXIOU. "Do you know them?"

DUTOCQ. "Yes."

BIXIOU. "Very well, then, I want to speak with them."

DUTOCQ (*drily*). "Do the caricature or let it alone; you will be chief clerk's assistant, or you will not."

BIXIOU. "Well, then, let us see those thousand francs."

DUTOCQ. "You shall have them against the drawing."

BIXIOU. "Go ahead! The caricature shall go the round of the offices to-morrow. So let us make fools of the Rabourdins!" (*To Saillard, Godard, and Baudoyer, who are conferring in whispers.*) "We are going to set our neighbors in a ferment." (*Goes out with Dutocq, and crosses over to Rabourdin's office. At sight of him, Fleury and Thuillier show signs of excitement.*) "Well, gentlemen, what is the matter? All that I told you just now is so true that you may have ocular demonstration at this moment of the most shameful delation. Go to the office of the virtuous, honest, estimable, upright, and pious Baudoyer; he is 'incompetent,' at any rate, in such a business as this! Your chief has invented a sort of guillotine for clerks, that is certain. Go and look at it, follow the crowd, there is nothing to pay if you are not satisfied, you shall have the full benefit of your misfortune *gratis*. What is more, the appointments have been postponed. The offices are in an uproar; and Rabourdin has just heard that he is not to work with the Minister to-day.—Just go!"

Phellion and Poiret stayed behind. Phellion was too much attached to Rabourdin to go in search of proof that might injure a man whom he had no wish to judge, and Poiret was to retire in five days' time. Just at that moment Sébastien came down stairs to collect some papers to be included with the documents for signature. He was sufficiently astonished to find the office empty, but he showed no sign of surprise.

PHELLION (*rising to his feet, a rare event*). "My young friend, do you know what is going on? what rumors are current with respect to Môsieur Rabourdin, to whom you are attached; for whom" (*lowering his voice for Sébastien's ear*), "for whom my affection is as great as my esteem? It is said

that he has been so imprudent as to leave a report of the clerks lying about somewhere——" (*stops suddenly short, for Sébastien turns as pale as a white rose, and sinks into a chair. Phellion is obliged to hold him in his muscular arms.*) "Put a key down his back; Môsieur Poiret! have you a key?"

POIRET. "I always carry my door key." (*Old Poiret, junior, pushes his key down Sébastien's collar; Phellion brings a glass of cold water. The poor boy opens his eyes, only to shed a torrent of tears; he lays his head on Phellion's desk, flings himself down in a heap as if stricken by lightning, and sobs in such a heartrending fashion, with such a genuine outpouring of grief, that Poiret, for the first time in his life, is touched with the sorrow of a fellow-creature.*)

PHELLION (*raising his voice*). "Come, come, my young friend! bear up! One must have courage in a great crisis! You are a man. What is the matter? What is there to upset you so in this affair? it is out of all reason."

SÉBASTIEN (*through his sobs*). "*I* have ruined M. Rabourdin! I left the paper about; I had been copying it; I have ruined my benefactor. This will kill me! Such a great man! A man that might have been a Minister!"

POIRET (*blowing his nose*). "Then he really made the report?"

SÉBASTIEN (*through his sobs*). "But it was for—— There! I am telling his secrets now! . . . Oh! that miserable Dutocq, *he* took it——"

At that the tears and sobs began afresh, and grew so violent, that Rabourdin came out of his office, recognized the voice, and went upstairs. He found Sébastien, half swooning, like a figure of Christ, in the arms of Phellion and Poiret; and the two clerks, with countenances distorted by compassion, grotesquely playing the parts of the Maries in the composition.

RABOURDIN. "What is the matter, gentlemen?"

SÉBASTIEN (*starting up, falls on his knees before Rabourdin*). "Oh, sir, I have ruined you! That list! Dutocq is showing it about. He found it out, no doubt!"

RABOURDIN (*composedly*). "I knew it." (*Raises Sébastien and draws him away.*) "My friend, you are a child!" (*To Phellion.*) "Where are they all?"

PHELLION. "They have gone to M. Baudoyer's study, sir, to look at a list which is said——"

RABOURDIN. "That will do" (*goes out with Sébastien. Poiret and Phellion, overcome with astonishment, look at one another, completely at a loss*).

POIRET (*to Phellion*). "M. Rabourdin! . . ."

PHELLION (*to Poiret*). "M. Rabourdin! . . ."

POIRET. "Well, if ever! M. Rabourdin! . . ."

PHELLION. "Did you see how he looked—quite calm and dignified in spite of everything?——"

POIRET (*with a grimace intended for a knowing air*). "I should not be at all surprised if there were something at the bottom of all this."

PHELLION. "A man of honor, blameless and stainless——"

POIRET. "And how about Dutocq?"

PHELLION. "Môsieur Poiret, you think as I think about Dutocq; do you not understand me?"

POIRET (*with two or three little knowing nods*). "Yes."

The others come back.

FLEURY. "This is coming it strong! I have seen it with my own eyes, and yet I can't believe it! M. Rabourdin, the best of men! Upon my word, if such as he can play the sneak, it is enough to sicken you with virtue. I used to put Rabourdin among Plutarch's heroes."

VIMEUX. "Oh! it is true."

POIRET (*bethinking himself that he has but five days to stay*). "But, gentlemen, what do you say about the man that lay in wait for M. Rabourdin and stole the papers?"

Dutocq slips out of the room.

FLEURY. "A Judas Iscariot! Who is he?"

PHELLION (*adroitly*). "He is not among us, that is certain."

VIMEUX (*an idea beginning to dawn upon him*). "It is Dutocq!"

PHELLION. "I have seen no proof whatever, môsieur. While you were out of the room, that young fellow, M. de la Roche, came in and was nearly heartbroken over it. Look, you see his tears on my desk."

POIRET. "He swooned in our arms—— Oh! my door-key; dear, dear! it is still down his back!" (*goes out.*)

VIMEUX. "The Minister would not work to-day with M. Rabourdin; the head of the staff came to say a word or two to M. Saillard; M. Baudoyer was advised to make application for the Cross of the Legion of Honor; one will be granted to the division at New Year, and it is to go to M. Baudoyer. Is that clear? M. Rabourdin is sacrificed by the very people for whom he worked. That is what Bixiou says. We were all dismissed except Phellion and Sébastien."

DU BRUEL (*comes in*). "Well, gentlemen, is it true?"

THUILLIER. "Strictly true."

DU BRUEL. "Good-day, gentlemen" (*puts on his hat and goes out*).

THUILLIER. "That vaudevilliste does not waste time on file-firing; he is off to the Duc de Rhétoré and the Duc de Maufrigneuse, but he may run! Colleville is to be our chief, they say."

PHELLION. "Yet he seemed to be attached to M. Rabourdin."

POIRET (*returns*). "I had all the trouble in the world to get back my door-key. The youngster is crying, and M. Rabourdin has completely disappeared. (*Dutocq and Bixiou come in together.*)

BIXIOU. "Well, gentlemen, queer things are happening in your office! Du Bruel!"—(*looks into du Bruel's cabinet.*) "Gone?"

THUILLIER. "Out."

BIXIOU. "And Rabourdin?"

FLEURY. "Melted away, evaporated, vanished in smoke! To think that such a man, the best of men!——"

POIRET (*to Dutocq*). "That youngster Sébastien, in his grief, accused you of taking the work, M. Dutocq, ten days ago——"

Bixiou (*looking at Dutocq*). "My dear fellow, you must clear yourself" (*all the clerks stare at Dutocq*).

Dutocq. "Where is the little viper that was copying it?"

Bixiou. "How do you know that he was copying it? Nothing but a diamond can cut a diamond, my dear fellow!" (*Dutocq goes out.*)

Poiret. "Look here, M. Bixiou; I have only five days and a half to stay in the office, and I should like for once—just for once—to have the pleasure of understanding you. Do me the honor to explain where the diamond comes in under the circumstances."

Bixiou. "It means, old man (for I am quite willing to descend to your level for once), it means that as the diamond alone can polish the diamond, so none but a pry is a match for his like."

Fleury. "'Pry' in this case being put for 'spy.'"

Poiret. "I do not understand——"

Bixiou. "Oh, well, another time you will."

M. Rabourdin had hurried away to the Minister. His Excellency was at the Chamber. Thither, accordingly, Rabourdin went and wrote a few lines, but the Minister was on his legs in the midst of a hot discussion. Rabourdin waited, not in the Salle des Conférences, but outside in the courtyard; he decided in spite of the cold to take up his post by His Excellency's carriage, and to speak with him as he came out. The sergeant-at-arms told him that a storm had been brewed by the nineteen members of the Extreme Left, and there had been a scene in the House. Rabourdin meanwhile, in feverish excitement, paced up and down in the courtyard. He waited for five mortal hours. At half-past six the House rose, and the Minister's chasseur came out with a message for the coachman.

"Hey, Jean! His Excellency has gone to the Palace with the Minister of War; they will dine together afterwards. We are to fetch them at ten o'clock. There is to be a meeting of the council."

Slowly Rabourdin walked home again in a state of exhaustion easy to imagine. It was seven o'clock. He had barely time to dress.

"Well!" his wife cried joyously, as he came into the drawing-room. "You have the appointment now."

Rabourdin raised his head in melancholy anguish. "I am very much afraid that I shall never set foot in the office again."

"What!" cried his wife, trembling with cruel anxiety.

"That memorandum of mine on the staff has been the round of the department; I tried to speak with the Minister, and could not."

A vision flashed before Célestine's eyes; some demon flung a sudden lurid light upon her last conversation with des Lupeaulx.

"If I had behaved like a vulgar woman," she thought, "we should have had the place."

She gazed at Rabourdin with something like anguish. There was a dreary silence, and at dinner both were absorbed in musings.

"And it is our Wednesday!" she exclaimed.

"All is not lost, dear Célestine," he answered, putting a kiss upon her forehead; "I may perhaps see the Minister to-morrow morning, and all will be cleared up. Sébastien sat up late last night, all the fair copies are made and in order. I will put the whole thing on the Minister's desk, and beg him to go through it with me. La Brière will help me. A man is never condemned without a hearing."

"I am curious to see whether M. des Lupeaulx will come to us to-day."

"He!—Of course he will come, he will not fail. There is something of the tiger in him—he loves to lick the blood after he has given the wound."

"My poor love, I do not know how a man that could think of so grand a reform should not see, at the same time, that no one must hear of it. Some ideas a man must keep within himself, because he, and he alone, can carry them out. You,

in your sphere, should have done as Napoleon did in his; he bent and twisted and crawled—yes, crawled!—for Bonaparte married Barras' mistress to gain a command. You should have waited; you should have been elected as a deputy; you should have watched the political changes, now in the trough of the sea, now on the crest of a wave; you should have adopted M. de Villèle's Italian motto *Col tempo,* otherwise rendered, 'All things come round to him that will but wait.' For seven years it has been M. de Villèle's aim to be in office; he took the first step in 1814, when he was just your present age, with a protest against the Charter. That is your mistake; you have been ready to act under orders; you were made to issue them."

The arrival of Schinner the painter put an end to this talk, but Rabourdin grew thoughtful over his wife's words.

Schinner grasped his hand. "An artist's devotion is of very little use, my dear fellow; but at such times as these we are staunch, we artists. I got an evening paper. Baudoyer is to be director, I see, and he is to have the Cross of the Legion of Honor."

"I am first in order of seniority, and I have been twenty-four years in the service," smiled Rabourdin.

"I know M. le Comte de Sérizy, the Minister of State, pretty well; if you like to make use of him, I can see him," said Schinner.

The rooms were filled with persons who knew nothing of the movements of the administration. Du Bruel did not appear. Mme. Rabourdin was more charming, and in higher spirits than usual; the horse, wounded on the battlefield, will summon up all its strength to carry its master.

The women behaved charmingly to her, now that she was defeated.

"She is very brave," said some.

"And yet she was very attentive to des Lupeaulx," the Baronne du Châtelet remarked to the Vicomtesse de Fontaine.

"Then do you think——"

"If so, M. Rabourdin would at least have had the Cross," said Mme. de Camps, defending her friend.

Towards ten o'clock des Lupeaulx appeared. To give an idea of his appearance, it can only be said that his spectacles looked melancholy, while there was laughter in his eyes; the glass veiled their expression so completely, that no one but a physiognomist could have seen the diabolical gleam in them. He grasped Rabourdin's hand, and Rabourdin could only submit to the pressure.

"We must have some talk together by and by," he said, as he seated himself beside the fair Rabourdin, who behaved to admiration.—"Ah! you are great," he said, with a side glance at her; "I find you as I imagined you—sublime in defeat. Do you know how very seldom people respond to our expectations of them! And so you are not overwhelmed by defeat. You are right, we shall triumph," he continued, lowering his voice. "Your fate will always be in your own hands so long as you have an ally in a man who worships you. We will hold a council."

"But Baudoyer is appointed, is he not?"

"Yes."

"And the Cross?"

"Not yet, but he is going to have it."

"Well?"

"You do not understand policy."

To Mme. Rabourdin it seemed as if that evening would never come to an end. Meanwhile, in the Place Royale a comedy was being played, a comedy that is always repeated in seven different salons after every change of government. The Saillards' sitting-room was full. M. and Mme. Transon came at eight o'clock. Mme. Transon kissed Mme. Baudoyer *née* Saillard. M. Bataille, the captain in the National Guard, came with his wife and the curé of Saint-Paul's.

"M. Baudoyer, I want to be the first to congratulate you," said Mme. Transon; "your talents have met with their deserts. Well, you have fairly earned your advancement."

"So now you are a director," added M. Transon, rubbing his hands; "it is a great honor for the Quarter."

"And without scheming for it, one may say indeed," cried old Saillard. "*We* are not intriguers; *we* do not go to the Minister's parties."

Uncle Mitral rubbed his nose, and smiled and looked at his niece; Elizabeth was talking with Gigonnet. Falleix did not know what to think of the blindness of Saillard and Baudoyer. Dutocq, Bixiou, du Bruel, and Godard came in, followed by Colleville, now chief clerk.

"What chumps!" said Bixiou, in an undertone for du Bruel's benefit. "What a fine caricature one might make of them—a lot of flat fish, stock-fish, and winkles all dancing a saraband."

"M. le Directeur," began Colleville, "I have come to congratulate you, or rather we all congratulate ourselves upon your appointment, and we have come to assure you of our zealous co-operation."

M. and Mme. Baudoyer, Isidore's father and mother, were there, to enjoy the triumph of their son and his wife. Uncle Bidault had dined at home; his little twinkling eyes dismayed Bixiou.

"There is a character that would do for a vaudeville," he said, pointing him out to du Bruel. "What does that fellow sell? Such an odd fish ought to be hung out for a sign at the door of an old curiosity shop. What a greatcoat! I thought that no one but Poiret could keep such a thing on exhibition after ten years of exposure to the inclemencies of the seasons."

"Baudoyer is magnificent," said du Bruel.

"Stunning!" returned Bixiou.

"Gentlemen," said Baudoyer, "this is my own uncle, M. Mitral; and this is my wife's great-uncle, M. Bidault!"

Gigonnet and Mitral looked keenly at the clerks; the metallic gleam of gold seemed to glitter in the old men's eyes; it impressed the two scoffers.

"Did you take a good look at that pair of uncles, eh?" asked Bixiou, as they walked under the arcades of the Palais Royal. "Two specimens of the genus Shylock. They go the

Market, I will be bound, and lend money at a hundred per cent per week. They lend on pledges, traffic in clothes, gold lace, cheese, women and children; they be Arabs, they be Greeks, they be Genoese-Genevese-Lombard Jews; brought forth by a Tartar and suckled by a she-wolf."

"Uncle Mitral was a bailiff once, I am certain," said Godard.

"There, you see!" said du Bruel.

"I must just go and see the sheets pulled off," continued Bixiou; "but I should dearly like to make a careful study of M. Rabourdin's salon; you are very lucky, du Bruel, you can go there."

"I?" said du Bruel; "what should I do there? My face does not lend itself to the expression of condolence. And besides, it is very vulgar nowadays to dance attendance on persons out of office."

At midnight Mme. Rabourdin's drawing-room was empty; three persons only remained—des Lupeaulx and the master and mistress of the house. When Schinner went, and M. and Mme. Octave de Camps had taken their leave, des Lupealx rose with a mysterious air, stood with his back to the clock, and looked at the husband and wife in turn.

"Nothing is lost, my friends," he said, "for we remain to you—the Minister and I. Dutocq, put between two powers, chose the stronger, as it seemed to him. He served the Grand Almonry and the Court and played me false; it is all in the day's work, a man in politics never complains of treachery. Still, Baudoyer is sure to be cashiered in a few months' time and transferred to the Prefecture of Police, for the Grand Almonry will not desert him."

With that, des Lupeaulx broke out into a long tirade over the Grand Almonry, and expatiated on the risks run by a Government that looked to the Church and the Jesuits for support. Still, it is worth while to point out that, though the Liberal papers laid such stress upon the influence of Court patronage and the Grand Almonry, neither of these counted for much in Baudoyer's promotion. Petty intrigue died away

in the higher spheres because greater questions were at stake. Perhaps M. Gaudron's importunities extorted a few words in Baudoyer's favor, but at the Minister's first remark the matter was allowed to drop. Passion in itself did the work of a very efficient spy among the members of the Congrégation; they used to denounce each other. And surely it was permissible to oppose that society to the brazen-fronted fraternity of the doctrine summed up by the formula, "Heaven helps him who helps himself." As for the occult power exercised by the Congrégation, it was for the most part wielded by subordinates who used the name of that body to conjure with for their private ends. Liberal rancor, in fact, delighted to represent the Grand Almonry as a giant; in politics, in the administration, in the army or the civil service. Fear always makes idols for itself. At this moment Baudoyer believed in the Grand Almonry, and all the while the only almonry that befriended him held its sessions at the Café Thémis. There are time in the history of the world when everything that happens amiss is set down to the account of some one institution, or man in power; nobody will give them credit for their abilities, they serve as synonyms and equivalent terms for crass stupidity. As M. de Talleyrand was supposed to hail every political event with an epigram, so in the same manner the Grand Almonry did and undid everything at this period. Unluckily, it did and undid nothing whatever. Its influence was not in the hands of a Cardinal Richelieu or a Cardinal Mazarin; it fell, on the contrary, to a sort of Cardinal Fleury, the kind of man that is timid for five years and rash for a day. At Saint-Merri, at a later day, the doctrine above-mentioned did with impunity what Charles X. only attempted to do in July 1830. If the proviso as to the censorship had not been so stupidly inserted in the new Charter, journalism also would have seen its Saint-Merri. The Orleans Branch would have carried out the scheme of Charles X., with the law at its back.

"Stop on under Baudoyer, summon up courage for that," continued des Lupeaulx, "be a true politician, put generous

thoughts and impulses aside, confine yourself to your duty, say not a word to your director, never give him advice, and act only upon his orders. In three months' time Baudoyer will leave the department; they will either dismiss him or transfer him to some other sphere of activity. Perhaps he may go to the Household. Twice in my life I have been buried under an avalanche of folly in this way; I let it go by."

"Yes," said Rabourdin, "but you were not slandered, your honor was not involved, you were not compromised——"

Des Lupeaulx interrupted him with a peal of Homeric laughter. "Why, that is the daily bread of every man of mark in the whole fair realm of France! There are two ways of taking it; you can go under, which means you pack yourself off and plant cabbages somewhere or other; or you rise above it, and walk fearlessly on without so much as turning your head."

"In my own case," said Rabourdin, "there is but one way of untying the slip-knot which espionage and treachery have tightened about my neck; it is this—I must have an explanation with the Minister at once; and if you are as sincerely attached to me as you say, it is in your power to bring me face to face with him to-morrow."

"Do you wish to lay your plan of administrative reform before him?"

Rabourdin bowed.

"Very well then, intrust your projects and memoranda to me, and he shall spend the night over them, I will engage."

"Then let us go together," Rabourdin answered quickly; "for after six years of work, at least I may expect the gratification of explaining it for an hour or two to a member of His Majesty's Government, for the Minister cannot choose but commend my perseverance."

Des Lupeaulx hesitated for a moment; Rabourdin's tenacity of purpose had put him on a road in which there was no cover for duplicity, so he looked at Mme. Rabourdin. "Which

shall turn the scale?" he asked himself—"my hatred of him, my liking for her?"

"If you cannot trust me," he returned after a pause, "I can see that, as far as I am concerned, you will always be the writer of that 'secret note.'—Good-bye, madame."

Mme. Rabourdin bowed coldly. Célestine and Xavier went to their own rooms without a word, so heavily their misfortune lay upon them. The wife thought of her own unpleasant position. The chief clerk was making up his mind never to set foot in the office again; he was lost in far-reaching thoughts. This step was to change the course of his life; he must strike out a new path. He sat all night before his fire; Célestine, in her night-dress, stole in on tiptoe now and again, but he did not see her.

"Since I must go back for the last time to take away my papers and to put Baudoyer in possession, let us try the effect of my resignation."

He drafted his resignation, meditated over his expressions, and wrote the following letter:

"Monseigneur,—I have the honor to enclose my resignation in the same cover; but I venture to believe that your Excellency will recollect that I said that I had placed my honor in your hands, and that an immediate explanation was necessary. The explanation which I implored in vain would probably now be useless, for a fragment of my work has been surreptitiously taken and distorted and misinterpreted by malevolence, and I am compelled to withdraw before the tacit censure of those in authority. Your Excellency may have thought, when I tried to obtain an interview that morning, that I wished to speak of my own advancement, whereas I was thinking only of the honor of your Excellency's department and the public good; it is of some consequence to me that your Excellency should lie under no misapprehension on this head," and the letter ended with the usual formulas.

By half-past seven o'clock the sacrifice had been made, the whole manuscript had been burned. Tired out with thought and overcome by moral suffering, Rabourdin fell into a doze, with his head resting on the back of the armchair. A strange sensation awakened him; he felt hot tears falling on his hands, and saw his wife kneeling beside him. Célestine had come in and read the letter. She understood the full extent of their ruin. They were reduced to live upon four thousand livres; and reckoning up her debts, she found that they amounted to thirty-two thousand francs. It was the most sordid poverty of all. And the noble man that had put such trust in her had no suspicion of the way in which she had abused his confidence. Célestine, fair as the Magdalen, was sobbing at his feet.

"The misfortune is complete," Xavier exclaimed in his dismay; "dishonored in the department, dishonored——"

A gleam of stainless honor flashed from Célestine's eyes; she sprang up like a frightened horse, her eyes flashed lightnings.

"I, *I?*" she cried in sublime tones. "Am I too an ordinary wife? If I had faltered, would you not have had your appointment? But it is easier to believe *that* than to believe the truth."

"What is it?" asked Rabourdin.

"You shall have it all in a few words," said she; "we owe thirty thousand francs."

Rabourdin caught her to him in a frenzy of joy, and made her sit on his knee.

"Never mind, darling," he said, and a great kindness that slid into the tones of his voice changed the bitterness of her tears into something vaguely and strangely sweet. "I too have made mistakes. I worked for my country to very little purpose; when I thought, at any rate, I might have done something worth the doing. . . . Now I will start out on a new path. If I had sold spices all this while, we should be millionaires by now. Very well, let us sell spices. You are only twenty-eight years old, my darling. In ten years'

time, hard work will give you back the luxury that you love, though we must give it up now for a little while. I too, darling, am not an ordinary husband. We will sell the farm; the value of the land has been going up for seven years; the surplus and the furniture will pay *my* debts."

In Célestine's kiss there was love given back a thousand-fold for that generous word.

"And then we shall have a hundred thousand francs to put into some business or other. In a month's time I shall find an investment. If Saillard happened upon a Martin Falleix, chance cannot fail us. Wait breakfast for me. I will come back from the Minister with my neck free of that miserable yoke."

Célestine held her husband in a tight clasp, with superhuman force; for the might of love gives a woman more than a man's strength, more power than the utmost transports of rage give to the strong. She was laughing and crying, talking and sobbing all at once.

When Rabourdin went out at eight o'clock, the porter handed him the burlesque visiting-cards sent in by Baudoyer, Bixiou, Godard, and the rest. Nevertheless, he went to the office, and found Sébastien waiting for him at the door; the lad begged him not to attempt to enter the place, a scurrilous caricature was being handed about.

"If you wish to alleviate the bitterness of my fall, bring me that drawing; for I am just taking my resignation myself to Ernest de la Brière, so that it may not be twisted out of all knowledge on its way to headquarters. I have my reasons for asking to see the caricature."

Rabourdin waited till he was sure that his letter was in the Minister's hands; then he went down to the courtyard. Sébastien gave him the lithographed drawing (of which a sketch is given here). There were tears in the boy's eyes.

"It is very clever," said Rabourdin, and the face that he turned upon the supernumerary was as serene as the Saviour's brow beneath the crown of thorns.

He walked in quietly as usual, and went straight to Bau-

EXECUTION
ADMINISTRAT

doyer's general office to give the necessary explanations before that slave of red-tape entered upon his new duties as director.

"Tell M. Baudoyer there is no time to lose," he added before Godard and the clerks. "My resignation is now in the Minister's hands, and I do not choose to stay in the office five minutes longer than I can help."

Then catching sight of Bixiou, Rabourdin walked up to him, held out the drawing, and said, to the astonishment of the clerks:

"Was I not right when I said that you were an artist? Only it is a pity that you used your pencil against a man whom it was impossible to judge in such a manner, or in the offices. But people ridicule everything in France—even God Himself."

With that he drew Baudoyer into the late la Billardière's rooms. At the door he met Phellion and Sébastien. They alone dared to show that they were faithful to the accused, even in this great shipwreck. Rabourdin saw the tears in Phellion's eyes, and in spite of himself he wrung the clerk's hand.

"Môsieur," the good fellow said, "if we can be of any use whatever, command us——"

"Come in, my friends," Rabourdin said with a gracious dignity.—"Sébastien, my boy, send in your resignation by Laurent; you are sure to be implicated in the slander that has driven me from my place, but I will take care of your future. We will go together."

Sébastien burst into tears.

M. Rabourdin closeted himself with M. Baudoyer in the late la Billardière's room, and Phellion assisted him to explain the difficulties of the position to the new head of the division. With each new file of papers displayed by Rabourdin, with the opening of every pasteboard case, Baudoyer's little eyes grew large as saucers.

"Good-day, monsieur," concluded Rabourdin, with ironical gravity.

Sébastien meantime made up a packet of papers belonging to the chief clerk, and took them away in a cab. Rabourdin crossed the great courtyard to wait on the Minister. All the clerks in the building were at the windows. Rabourdin waited for a few minutes, but the Minister made no sign. Then, accompanied by Phellion and Sébastien, he went out. Phellion bravely went as far as the Rue Duphot with the fallen official, by way of expressing his admiration and respect; then he returned to his desk, quite satisfied with himself. He had paid funeral honors to a great unappreciated talent for administration.

Bixiou (*as Phellion comes in*). *"Victrix causa diis placuit, sed victa Catoni."*

Phellion. "Yes, monsieur."

Poiret. "What does that mean?"

Fleury. "It means that the clericals rejoice, and that M. Rabourdin goes out with the esteem of all men of honor."

Dutocq (*nettled*). "You talked very differently yesterday."

Fleury. "Say another word to me, and you shall feel my fist in your face. You sneaked M. Rabourdin's work, that is certain!" (*Dutocq goes out.*) "Now, go and complain to your M. des Lupeaulx, you spy!"

Bixiou (*grinning and grimacing like a monkey*). "I am curious to see how the division will get on. M. Rabourdin was such a remarkable man, that he must have had something in view when he made that list. The department is losing an uncommonly clever head" (*rubbing his hands*).

Laurent. "M. Fleury is wanted in the secretary's office."

Omnes. "Sacked!"

Fleury (*from the door*). "It is all one to me; I have got a berth as a responsible editor. I can lounge about all day, or find something amusing to do in the newspaper office."

Bixiou. "Dutocq has had poor old Desroys dismissed already; he was accused of wanting to cut off people's heads——"

THUILLIER. *"Les têtes des rois?"* (Desroys.)

BIXIOU. "Accept my congratulations. That is neat."

Enter COLLEVILLE (*exultant*). "Gentlemen, I am your chief clerk!"

THUILLIER (*embracing him*). "Oh, my friend, if I were chief myself, I should not be so pleased!"

BIXIOU. "His wife did that stroke of business, but it is not a master-stroke."

POIRET. "I should like to know the meaning of all this."

BIXIOU. "You want to know?—There it is. The Chamber is, and always will be, the ante-chamber of the Administration, the Court is the boudoir, the ordinary way is the cellar, the bed is made now more than ever in the little byways thereof."

POIRET. "M. Bixiou, explain yourself, I beg."

BIXIOU. "I will give you a paraphrase of my opinion. If you mean to be anything at last, you must be everything at first. Obviously, administrative reforms must be made; for, upon my word and honor, if the employés rob the Government of the time they ought to give to it, the Government robs them in return to make matters even. We do little because we get next to nothing; there are far too many of us for the work to be done, and *La Vertueuse Rabourdin* saw all that! That great man among the scribes foresaw the inevitable result, gentlemen, the 'working' (as simpletons are pleased to call it) of our admirable Liberal institutions. The Chamber will soon want to meddle with the Administration, and officials will want to be legislators. The Government will try to administer the laws, and the Administration will try to govern the country. Laws, accordingly, will be transformed into rules and regulations, and regulations will be treated as laws. God made this epoch for those that can enjoy a joke. I am looking on in admiration at the spectacle set forth for us by Louis XVIII., the greatest wag of modern times (*general amazement*). And if France, gentlemen, the best administered country in Europe, is in such a way, think what a state the others must be in. Poor countries! I won-

der how they get on at all without the two Chambers, the Liberty of the Press, the Report, the Memorial, and the Circular, and a whole army of clerks!—Think, now, how do they contrive to have an army or a navy? How can they exist when there is no one to weigh the pros and cons of every breath they draw and every mouthful that they eat?—Can that sort of thing be called a government or a country? These funny fellows that travel about have stood me out that foreigners pretend to have a policy of their own, and that they enjoy a certain influence; but, there—I pity them! They know nothing of 'the spread of enlightenment'; they cannot 'set ideas in circulation'; they have no free and independent tribunes; they are sunk in barbarism. There is no nation like the French for intelligence! Do you grasp that, M. Poiret? (*Poiret looks as if he had received a sudden shock.*) Can you understand how a country can do without heads of divisions, directors-general, and dispense with a great staff of officials that is, and has been, the pride of France and of the Emperor Napoleon, who had his very sufficient reasons for creating places to fill? But, there—since these countries have the impudence to exist; since the War Office at Vienna employs scarcely a hundred clerks all told (whereas with us, little as they expected it before the Revolution, salaries and pensions now eat up one-third of the revenue), I will sum up by suggesting that as the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres has very little to do, it might as well offer a prize for the solution of the following problem: 'Which is the better constituted—the State that does a great deal with a few officials, or the State that does little and keeps plenty of officials to do it?' "

Poiret. "Is that your last word?"

Bixiou. "*Ja, mein Herr!—Oui, monsieur!—Si, signor!—Da!* I spare you the other languages."

Poiret (*raising his hands to heaven*). "Good Lord! and they tell me that you are clever!"

Bixiou. "Then did you not understand after all?"

Phellion. "Anyhow, there is plenty of sense in that last remark——"

Bixiou "It is like the budget, as complicated as it seems to be simple; and thus I set it for you, like an illumination lamp upon the edge of that break-neck precipice, that hole, that abyss, volcano, or what not, which the *Constitutionnel* calls 'the political horizon.' "

Poiret. "I would rather have an explanation that I can understand."

Bixiou. "Long live Rabourdin!—that is my opinion. Are you satisfied?"

Colleville (*gravely*). "There is only one thing to be said against M. Rabourdin."

Poiret. "What is it?"

Colleville. "He was not a chief clerk; he was a statesman."

Phellion (*planting himself in front of Bixiou*). "Môsieur, if you appreciated M. Rabourdin so well, what made you draw that disgus—that inf—that shocking caricature?"

Bixiou. "How about that wager? Do you forget that I was playing the devil's game, and that your office owes me a dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale?*"

Poiret (*much ruffled*). "It seems to be written that I am to leave this place without comprehending a single idea in anything that M. Bixiou says."

Bixiou. "It is your own fault. Ask these gentlemen! Gentlemen, did you understand the gist of my observations? Were they just? Were they luminous?"

Omnes. "Yes, alas!"

Minard. "Here is proof of it: I have just sent in my resignation. Good-day, gentlemen; I am going into business——"

Bixiou. "Have you invented a mechanical corset or a feeding-bottle, a fire-pump or pattens, a stove that gives heat without fuel, or cooks a cutlet with three sheets of paper?"

Minard (*going*). "I shall keep my secret to myself."

Bixiou. "Ah, well, young Poiret, junior, these gentlemen all understand me, you see!"

POIRET (*mortified*). "M. Bixiou, will you do me the honor to descend to my level just for once——"

BIXIOU (*winking at the others*). "By all means. Before you go, you may perhaps be glad to know what you are——"

POIRET (*quickly*). "An honest man, sir."

BIXIOU (*shrugging his shoulders*). "To define, explain, explore, and analyze the employé. Do you know how?"

POIRET. "I think so."

BIXIOU (*twisting one of Poiret's buttons*). "I doubt it."

POIRET. "An employé is a man paid to work for the Government."

BIXIOU. "Obviously. Then a soldier is an employé?"

POIRET (*perplexed*). "Why, no."

BIXIOU. "At any rate, he is paid by the Government to go on guard and to be passed in review. You will tell me that he is too anxious to leave his post, that he is not long enough at his post, that he works too hard, and touches metal too seldom (the barrel of his gun always excepted)."

POIRET (*opening wide eyes*). "Well, then, sir, an employé, more strictly speaking, is a man who must draw his salary if he is to live; he is not free to leave his post, and he can do nothing but copy and dispatch documents."

BIXIOU. "Ah, now we are arriving at a solution! So the government office is the employé's shell? You cannot have the one without the other. Now, what are we to say about the tide-waiter? (*Poiret tries to stamp in vexation, and escapes; but Bixiou, having pulled off one button, holds him by another.*) "Bah! in the bureaucratic world he probably is a neuter. The customs-house official is a semi-employé; he is on the frontier just as he is on the borderland between the civil service and the army; he is not exactly a soldier, and not precisely an employé either. But look here, daddy, where are we going?" (*twists the button*). "Where does the employé end? It is an important question. Is a prefect an employé?"

POIRET (*nervously*). "He is a functionary."

Bixiou. "Oh! you are coming to a contradiction in terms! So a functionary is not an employé!"

Poiret (*looks round exhausted*). "M. Godard looks as though he had something to say."

Godard. "The employé represents the order, the functionary the genus."

Bixiou. "Clever *sub*-ordinate! I should not have thought you capable of so ingenious a distinction."

Poiret. "Where are we going?"

Bixiou. "There, daddy, let us not trip ourselves up with words. Listen, and we shall come to an understanding in the end. Look here, we will establish an axiom, which I bequeath to the office—The functionary begins where the employé ends, and the functionary leaves off where the statesman begins. There are very few statesmen, however, among prefects. So the prefect would seem to be a kind of neuter among superior orders of being; he is half-way between the statesman and the employé, much as the tide-waiter is not exactly a soldier or a civilian, but something of both. Let us continue to unravel these lofty questions." (*Poiret grows red in the face.*) "Can we not state the matter in a theorem worthy of la Rochefoucauld? When salaries reach the limit line of twenty thousand francs, the employé ceases. Hence we may logically deduce the first corollary—The statesman reveals himself in the sphere of high salaries. Likewise this second and no less important corollary—It is possible for a director-general to be a statesman. Perhaps deputies mean something of this kind when they think within themselves that 'it is a fine thing to be a director-general.' Still, in the interests of the French language and the Academy——"

Poiret (*completely fascinated by Bixiou's fixity of gaze*). "The French language!—the Academy!——"

Bixiou (*twisting off a second button, and seizing upon the one above it*). "Yes, in the interests of our noble language, your attention must be called to the fact that if a chief clerk, strictly speaking, may still be an employé, a head

of the division is of necessity a bureaucrat. These gentlemen"—(*turning to the clerks, and holding up Poiret's third button for their inspection*)—"these gentlemen will appreciate all the delicacy of that subtle shade of distinction. —And so, Papa Poiret, the employé ends absolutely at the head of a division. So here is the question settled once for all—there is no more doubt about it; the employé, who might seem to be indefinable, is defined."

Poiret. "Beyond a doubt, as it seems to me."

Bixiou. "And yet, be so far my friend as to solve me this problem: A judge is permanently appointed, consequently, according to your subtle distinction, he cannot be a functionary; and as his salary and the amount of work do not correspond, ought he to be included among employés?"

Poiret (*gazing at the ceiling*). "Monsieur, I cannot follow you now——"

Bixiou (*nipping off a fourth button*). "I wanted to show you, monsieur, in the first place, that nothing is simple; but more particularly—and what I am about to remark is meant for the benefit of philosophists (if you will permit me to twist a saying attributed to Louis XVIII.)—I wish to point out that, side by side with the need of a definition, lies the peril of getting mixed."

Poiret (*wiping his forehead*). "I beg your pardon, monsieur, I feel queasy" (*tries to button his overcoat*). "Oh! you have cut off all my buttons!"

Bixiou. "Well, *now* do you understand?"

Poiret (*vexed*). "Yes, sir. Yes. I understand that you meant to play me a very nasty trick by cutting off my buttons while I was not looking."

Bixiou (*solemnly*). "Old man, you err. I was trying to engrave upon your mind as lively an image of the Government as is possible" (*all eyes are turned on Bixiou. Poiret, in his amazement, looks round at the others with vague uneasiness*). "That is how I kept my word. I took the parabolic method known to savages. (Now *listen!*) While the Ministers are at the Chambers, starting discussions just

about as profitable and conclusive as ours, the Administration is cutting off the taxpayers' buttons."

OMNES. "Bravo, Bixiou!"

POIRET (*as he begins to comprehend*). "I do not grudge my buttons now."

BIXIOU. "And I shall do as Minard does. I do not care to sign receipts for such trifling sums any longer; I deprive the department of my co-operation" (*goes out amid general laughter*).

Meanwhile another and more instructive scene was taking place in the Minister's reception-room; more instructive, be it said, because it may give some idea of the way in which great ideas come to nothing in lofty regions, and how the inhabitants thereof find consolation in misfortune. At this particular moment des Lupeaulx was introducing M. Baudoyer, the new director. Two or three Ministerialist deputies were present besides M. Clergeot, to whom His Excellency gave assurance of an honorable retiring pension. After various commonplace remarks, the event of the day came up in conversation.

A DEPUTY. "So Rabourdin has gone for good."

DES LUPEAULX. "He has sent in his resignation."

CLERGEOT. "He wanted to reform the service, they said."

THE MINISTER (*looking at the deputies*). "Perhaps the salaries are not proportionate to the services required."

DE LA BRIÈRE. "According to M. Rabourdin, a hundred men, with salaries of twelve thousand francs apiece, will do the same work better and more expeditiously than a thousand at twelve hundred francs."

CLERGEOT. "Perhaps he is right."

THE MINISTER. "There is no help for it! The machine is made that way; the whole thing would have to be taken to pieces and reconstructed; and who would have the courage to do that in front of the tribune and under the fire of stupid declamation from the Opposition or terrific articles in the press? Still, some day or other there will be a disastrous

hitch somewhere between the Government and the Administration."

THE DEPUTY. "What will happen?"

THE MINISTER. "Some Minister will see a good thing to be done, and will be unable to do it. You will have created interminable delays between legislation and carrying the law into effect. You may make it impossible to steal a five-franc piece, but you cannot prevent collusion to gain private ends. Some things will never be done until clandestine stipulations have been made; and it is very difficult to detect such things. And, then, every man on the staff, from the chief down to the lowest clerk, will soon have his own opinion on this matter and that; they will no longer be hands directed by a brain, they will not carry out the intentions of the Government. The Opposition is gradually giving them a right to speak and vote against the Government, and to condemn it."

BAUDOYER (*in a low voice, but not so low as to be inaudible*). "His Excellency is sublime!"

DES LUPEAULX. "Bureaucracy certainly has its bad side; it is slow and insolent, I think; it hampers the action of the department overmuch; it snuffs out many a project; it stops progress; but, still, the French administration is wonderfully useful——"

BAUDOYER. "Certainly."

DES LUPEAULX. "——if only as a support to the trade in stationery and stamps. And if, like many excellent housewives, the civil service is apt to be a little bit fussy, she can give an account of her expenditure at any moment. Where is the clever man in business that would not be only too glad to drop five per cent on his turnover if some insurance agent would undertake to guarantee him against 'leakage.'"

THE DEPUTY (*a manufacturer*). "Manufacturers on both sides of the Atlantic would be delighted to make a bargain with the imp known as 'leakage' on such terms as those."

DES LUPEAULX. "Well, statistics may be the weakness of the modern statesman; he is apt to take figures for calculation, but we must use figures to make calculations; therefore,

let us calculate. If a society is based on money and self-interest, it takes its stand on figures, and society has been thus based since the Charter was drawn up; so I think, at least. And, then, there is nothing like a column of figures for carrying conviction to the 'intelligent masses.' Everything, in fact, so say our statesmen of the Left, can be resolved into figures. So to figures let us betake ourselves" (*the Minister takes one of the deputies aside and begins to talk in a low voice.*) "Here, in France, there are about forty thousand men in the employ of the Government; not counting road-menders, crossing-sweepers, and cigarette-makers. Fifteen hundred francs is the average amount of a salary. Multiply fifteen hundred francs by forty thousand, and you get sixty millions.—And before we go any farther, a publicist might call the attention of China, Austria, Russia (where civil servants rob the Government), and divers American republics to the fact that for this sum France obtains the fussiest, most fidgety, interfering, inquisitive, meddlesome, pains-taking, categorical set of scribblers and hoarders of wastepaper, the veriest old wife among all known administrations. Not one farthing can be paid or received in France but a written order must be made out, checked off by a counterfoil, produced again and again at every stage of the business, and duly receipted at the end. And afterwards the demand and the receipt must be filed, entered, posted, and checked by a set of men in spectacles. The official understrapper takes fright at the least sign of an informality, for he lives by such *minutiæ*. Well, plenty of countries would be satisfied with that; but Napoleon went further. He, great organizer as he was, re-established supreme magistrates in one court, a unique court in the world. These functionaries spent their days in checking off all the bills, pay-sheets, muster-rolls, deposit certificates, receipts, and statements of expenditure, and all the files and bundles of wastepaper which the staff first covered with writing. Those austere judges possessed a talent for *minutiæ*, a genius for investigation, and a lynx-eyed perspicacity in book-keeping, which reached such an

extreme, that they went through every column of additions in their quest of frauds. They were sublime martyrs of arithmetic; they would send back a statements of accounts to a superintendent of army stores because they had detected an error of two farthings made two years previously. So the French administration is the most incorruptible service that ever accumulated wastepaper on the surface of the globe; theft, as His Excellency observed just now, it all but impossible in France, and malversation a figment of the imagination.

"Well, where is the objection? France draws an annual revenue of twelve hundred millions, and she spends it; that is all. Twelve hundred millions come into her cash-box, and twelve hundred millions go out. She actually handles two milliards four hundred millions, and only pays two and a half per cent to guarantee herself against leakage. Our political kitchen account only amounts to sixty millions; the gendarmerie, the law-courts, the prisons, and detectives cost us more and do nothing in return. And we find employment for a class of men who are fit for nothing else, you may be very sure. The waste, if waste there is, could not be better regulated; the Chambers are art and part in it; the public money is squandered in strictly legal fashion. The real leakage consists in ordering public works that are not needed, or not immediately needed; in altering soldiers' uniforms; in ordering men-of-war without ascertaining whether timber is dear or no at the time; in unnecessary preparations for war; in paying the debts of a state without demanding repayment or security, and so forth, and so forth."

Baudoyer. "But the employé has nothing to do with leakage in high quarters. Mismanagement of national affairs concerns the statesman at the helm."

The Minister (*his conversation being concluded*). "There is truth in what des Lupeaulx was saying just now; but" (*turning to Baudoyer*) "you must bear in mind that no one is looking at the matter from a statesman's point of view. It does not follow that because such and such a piece of ex-

penditure was unwise or even useless that it was a case of maladministration. In any case, it sets money circulating; and in France, of all countries, stagnation in trade is fatal, because the profoundly illogical habit of hoarding coin is so prevalent in the provinces, and so much gold is kept out of circulation as it is——"

THE DEPUTY (*who has been listening to des Lupeaulx*). "But it seems to me that if Your Excellency is right, and if our witty friend here" (*taking des Lupeaulx by the arm*), "if our friend is not wrong, what are we to think?"

DES LUPEAULX (*after exchanging a glance with the Minister*). "Something must be done, no doubt."

DE LA BRIÈRE (*diffidently*). "Then M. Rabourdin is right?"

THE MINISTER. "I am going to see Rabourdin."

DES LUPEAULX. "The poor man was so misguided as to constitute himself supreme judge of the administration and the staff; he wants to have no more than three departments."

THE MINISTER (*interrupting*). "Why, the man is mad!"

THE DEPUTY. "How is he going to represent the different parties in the Chamber?"

BAUDOYER (*with an air that is meant to be knowing*). "Perhaps, at the same time, M. Rabourdin is changing the Constitution which we owe to the King-Legislator."

THE MINISTER (*growing thoughtful, takes de la Brière by the arm and steps aside*). "I should like to look at Rabourdin's scheme; and since you know about it——"

DE LA BRIÈRE (*in the cabinet*). "He has burned it all. You allowed him to be dishonored; he has resigned. You must not suppose, my lord, that he entertained the preposterous idea, attributed to him by des Lupeaulx, of making any change in the admirable centralization of authority."

THE MINISTER (*to himself*). "I have made a mistake." (*A moment's pause*). "Bah! there will never be any scarcity of schemes of reform——"

DE LA BRIÈRE. "We have ideas in plenty; we lack the men that can carry them out."

Just then des Lupeaulx, insinuating advocate of abuses, entered the cabinet.

"I am going down to my constituents, Your Excellency."

"Wait!" returned His Excellency, and turning from his private secretary, he drew des Lupeaulx to a window. "Give up that arrondissement to me, my dear fellow; you shall have the title of Count, and I will pay your debts. . . . And—and if I am still in office after next election, I will find a way of putting you in with a batch to be made a peer of France."

"You are a man of honor; I accept."

And so it came to pass that Clément Chardin des Lupeaulx, whose father was ennobled by Louis XV., and bore *quarterly; of the first, argent, a wolf sable, ravissant, carrying a lamb, gules; of the second, purpur, three buckles argent, two and one; of the third, barry of six, gules and argent; of the fourth, gules, a caduceus winged and wreathed with serpents, vert;* with four griffins' claws for supporters; and EN LUPUS IN HISTORIA for a motto, managed to surmount his half-burlesque escutcheon with a Count's coronet.

Towards the end of December 1830, business brought Rabourdin back to his old office. The whole department had been shaken by changes from top to bottom; and the revolution affected the messengers more than anybody else—they are never very fond of new faces. Knowing all the people in the place, Rabourdin had come early in the morning, and so chanced to overhear a conversation between Laurent's nephews, for Antoine had been pensioned.

"Well, how is your chief?"

"Don't speak of him; I can make nothing of him. He rings to ask whether I have seen his pocket-handkerchief or his snuff-box. He does not keep people waiting, but has them shown in at once; he has not the least dignity, in fact. I myself am obliged to say, 'Why, sir, the Count, your predecessor, in the interests of authority, used to whittle his armchair with a penknife to make people believe that he worked.' In short, he makes a regular muddle of it; the place does not know

itself, to my thinking; he is a very poor creature. How is yours?"

"Mine? Oh, I have trained him at last; he knows where his paper and envelopes are kept, and where the firewood is, and all his things. My other used to swear; this one is good-tempered. But he is not the big style of thing; he has no order at his buttonhole. I like a chief to have an order; if he hasn't, they may take him for one of us, and that is so mortifying. He takes home office stationery, and asked me if I could go to his house to wait at evening parties."

"Ah! what a Government, my dear fellow!"

"Yes, a set of swindlers."

"I wish they may not nibble at our poor salaries."

"I am afraid they will. The Chambers keep a sharp look-out on you. They haggle over the firewood."

"Oh well, if that is the style of them, it will not last long."

"We are in for it! Somebody is listening."

"Oh! it is M. Rabourdin that used to be. . . . Ah! sir, I knew you by your way of coming in. . . . If you want anything here, there is nobody that will know the respect that is owing to you; there is nobody of your time left now but us. M. Colleville and M. Baudoyer did not wear out the leather on their chairs after you went. Lord! six months afterwards they got appointments as receivers of taxes at Paris."

PARIS, *July* 1836.

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